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Craft Australia
Summer 1985/4

Craft Australia is published by the Crafts Council of Australia, 100 George Street, Sydney Phone: 241 1701

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ISSN 0311-046x

Maximum recommended retail price $5.95/NZ$6.50

Cover: Bi-cornual basket from Queensland Aborigines. Partially completed. Photo John Michael Day. Australian Museum, Sydney.

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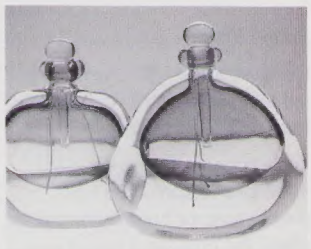


Craftline

The crafts community will soon be serviced by a nationwide computer network designed expressly for Australia by John Kerrisk: *Craftline*. This is an international first. The computer network is coordinated by the Crafts Council of Australia and initially funded by the Crafts Board of the Australia Council and State Arts funding agencies.

Craftline will provide near instant data on the nationwide craftworker's biographical registers; state craft council membership; state crafts shops; selling exhibitions; a current calendar of events; information on craft interest groups and guilds and much more.

Eventually *Craftline* will produce up-to-date information in at least sixteen categories.

Each state council will have instant access to state and national data. This will be of value to craftspeople seeking supplies, galleries looking for new artists and to state specialty guilds seeking to build a nationwide network of contacts.

The development of *Craftline* reflects the maturity of Australian crafts. No other nation has such a fully developed support system for artists. The Crafts Board is to be commended for funding this information network, the Crafts Council should be praised for its organisation of the structure that has made it all possible and the past editors of ***Craft Australia*** deserve glory for their documentation of Australian crafts since 1971, the year of the magazine's first appearance.

About our next issue

Our Autumn magazine contains our annual Education Supplement and it has proved to be our most popular issue. We will also have a long-awaited feature on artist-potter Jeff Mincham, a look at Australian stamp design, weaving from Tasmania and much more. We will also be previewing some of the 1986 Craft Expo participants. We will also have news of the Ascraft Craft Writing Award winner, a prize that has done much to develop writing in the crafts in Australia.

Michael Bogle

LETTERS

Readers may telephone letters of 50 words or less between 10:00-4:00, Monday through Friday.
Call (02) 241-1701.

Please keep your letters short so we can publish as many as possible. Some letters may be edited for length.

To the Editor:

Congratulations on a wonderful exhibition of Australian crafts at the 1985 Craft Expo.

To make sure I can attend the 1986 Craft Expo could you please give me some information about the proposed venue and dates for the 1986 Expo.

I really enjoy and appreciate the *Craft Australia* publication and I look forward to each edition.

After twenty years as a teacher, the last five of which were spent as a senior administrator I decided at the end of last year to get out of the rat race and follow my dream to pursue my own craft area which is in the textile crafts. I now teach spinning, weaving and embroidery and I thoroughly enjoy my new life style.

I have no ambition to reach the heights of national recognition but your organisation certainly makes it seem possible.

Keep up the good work.

Dianne Goulding
Westbury, via Moe
Victoria

The 1986 Expo will be held in Sydney over the early June long weekend. Some thought is being given to the concept of future national media-based Expo's such as jewellery, textiles and so on, with the comprehensive Expo on a biennial basis. Discussions in 1985/86 will decide.

To the Editor:

While I was overseas, I looked at the craft magazine in various countries and decided that ***Craft Australia*** was always much better, in both content and illustrations.

I have enjoyed reading it over the years and hope that it continues to be so interesting and well presented.

Alison Ross
Mia Mia, Victoria

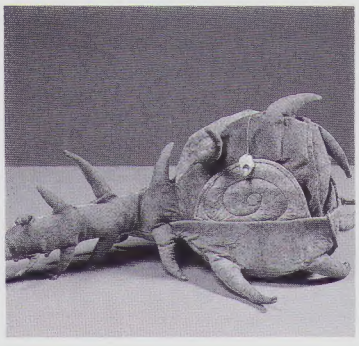
To the Editor:

I am seeking a NSW glass artist who would consider me as a trainee. I am currently working on a project using leadlight in Hobart. I have 12 months experience working full-time with leadlight. Areas of interest include advanced fusing and slumping techniques and/or glass painting. I am ready to begin work in March 1985.

Perhaps you could advertise my intentions in the next magazine. I am a member of the Crafts Council in Hobart.

Your co-operation will be greatly appreciated.

Diana Michalek
Bellerive, Tasmania



To the Editor:

I wish to draw your attention to errors in the Education Supplement, Autumn 1985.

On pages 62-63, an incorrect caption on the leather piece. This piece was made by Linda Barrass, 3rd Year Degree **Ogre Shell Bag.** 50 x 25 cms, 1985.

The second error occurred on the last page in the 'Crafts Courses Available' section. The leather courses offered by the Canberra School of Art were not acknowledged in the summary. This is an unfortunate oversight, as the Canberra School of Art is the only advanced education art institution to offer comprehensive programs in leather.

Apart from this, the Education Supplement was excellent and a useful reference, and I look forward to the next issue.

Ms Penelope Amberg, Head, Leather Workshop Canberra School of Art.

We apologise for this caption error and reproduce the artwork above. Apologies too for Linda Barrass. In our craft courses guide in Autumn 1985, we did not include leather or 'mixed media' because of space restrictions. This earned us several cuffs.

The Editor.

To the Editor:

Although your magazine usually brings us a great deal of pleasure, we would like to express our disappointment in your interest in Michael Anderson's jewellery and particularly in the cover of your Winter issue. We felt it was a display of poor taste and a lowering of standards of aesthetic art.

The 'eccentric' expression of aggression is repulsive, and does nothing to contribute to a peaceful society!

'Enough, if something from our hands have power, To live and act, and serve the future hour' (Wordsworth) – words to ponder and note!

Clem and Edith Davenport
Bayswater, Victoria

To the Editor:

The cover on the Winter 85/2 issue of Craft Australia was so off-putting that I delayed some weeks before buying a copy and I have been a subscriber for many years – almost from the first issue.

Craft Australia has had some stunning covers in the past but a naked lady wearing a rubber vest was just too *kitsch* for me. I do not bat a comfortable middle-aged eye at all the 'topless' ladies on the beaches but I am wondering if the next advance in visual delights will be 'bottomless' ladies in rubber vests. Perhaps if Michael Anderson could make these vests inflatable they might at least be useful in the water and maybe even scare away the sharks!

Lets see some 'real' craft from 'mature' craftspeople on your covers.

Libby Gordon
Naremburn NSW

P.S. I am not just someone who sits on the sidelines and criticises. I was on the Craft Council of NSW committee for 5 years and President for 2 years around 1978 and am a long time supporter of the goals and achievements of the Crafts Council.

To the Editor:

As a designer (industrial) who is now totally committed to improving the design element and the encouragement of the crafts, particularly wood, metal, glass and ceramics, I agree with the editorial, 'Dismantle the Design Arts Board'.

Design 'excellence' should come through in all aspects of a product, whether it may be production run, one-off or limited edition.

The Crafts Board of the Australia Council does what it can with limited funds, but to be fair to the D.A.B., they have on their staff ex-designers who work in with the Industrial Design Council on design promotion for designers who are just as much in need of encouragement as craftspersons.

How about sharing some of this design promotional know-how with the Crafts Council of Australia and the Crafts Board of the Australia Council?

B.A. Petts
Devonport, Tasmania

To the Editor:

I am appalled at the creation of the Design Arts Board as outlined in your latest editorial.

As you say the professional groups represented are well catered for without taking funds from the embattled Australia Council.

If there is any way of Craft Council members registering a protest please let me know – what about a petition signed by members and endorsed by the Crafts Council.

Libby Gordon
Naremburn, NSW

To the Editor:

Your editorial in the Winter issue calling for the disbanding of The Design Arts Board must surely be a cause for widespread regret.

Not because of the (quite erroneous) allegation that its 'clients' are architects, engineers, fashion/textile/graphic/industrial designers, landscape architects and planners, but because of the lack of recognition of the fundamentally important role the Board is playing in Australia's cultural development.

It must be an additional cause for regret that not all members of the design-based disciplines can see, or perhaps want to see, the value in working together for ultimately a bigger 'cake', of superior quality, rather than reflect upon respective shares. It is of interest to note that in 1983 the Craft Council of Australia appeared to be a 'client' of the Crafts Board of The Australia Council and enjoyed from that source grants totalling $250,000, this sum equating to the entire revenue of the Design Arts Board for that year.

The Design Arts Board did not, as has been suggested, suddenly appear as the 'latest creation of the Australia Council'. It began in fact in 1980 as the Architecture and Design Panel of the Visual Arts Board. Its objectives, which have remained unchanged, have been pursued assiduously by its talented and dedicated members since formation, with minimal funds, but much resolve.

It might be of interest that when some 10 design orientated organisations came together in September 1984 shortly after the Board achieved its present status – comparable in standing (if not in funding provision) with the Crafts Board – there was unanimous agreement that the community has a low expectation of design, and overwhelmingly supported the need to improve awareness of, and heighten public confidence in, Australian design capability.

The Royal Australian Institute of Architects, representing but one of the design-orientated disciplines is totally self-supporting and does not seek government funding to serve its own ends. When nominal grants come its way, these are used as seeding only for community awareness programs. And while on the subject of money a recently conducted survey shows that around one quarter of the architectural profession enjoys an income less than the average (employed) Australian, and that the average architect's income is around $25,000 p.a. Architecture can hardly be said to be a 'profitable commercial area of design'.

The R.A.I.A. needs the Design Arts Board, and *vice versa*, to progress a common interest in design awareness programs in the community. In time it is earnestly hoped that informed future generations will demand the highest skills designers can deliver.

There is a long history of successful association of crafts and other design disciplines with architecture. Much remains to be done to foster and develop these associations and in the community interest to demonstrate how quality of design represents good value and enriches our lives and culture.

May all of us involved in the design profession lift our corporate sights, take in the broader view and take every opportunity for convergence towards progressing this worthy cause in Australia's interests.

Donald Bailey
Executive Director R.A.I.A.

To the Editor:

Your editorial in your latest issue Winter 1985/2, entitled 'Dismantle the Design Arts Board!' reveals attitudes which are all too common and which do the community of artists in general no good. As a former member of the Crafts Board, I am well aware of the urgent need for funds, and particularly funding to support the individual craftsman. However I am also conscious that bickering between the various arts weakens their case in the eyes of the public and therefore, of the politicians.

Besides exemplifying this general lack of mutual support, your editorial reveals specific ignorances and prejudices related to design, summed up in your phrase 'These profitable commercial areas of design . . .'. First of all we notice the implicit distinction: design is commercial and profane; art non-commercial (not for sale?) and sacred. This is mere snobbery, though of a popular kind. Secondly, reinforcing the tone of 'commercial' we have 'profitable'. Making a profit is of course very wicked whilst making a loss is always virtuous. But in fact on this criterion designers tend to be virtuous rather than wicked. A very few do become rich; so do a few artists in other fields. The great majority of designers however work very long hours for no more than the average wage; when one calculates their return per hour, they would be better off cleaning windows. Besides that, they are exposed to very serious legal responsibilities and risks. In sum, being a designer represents a personal commitment and financial sacrifice comparable to that made by people dedicated to the other arts.

It is true, too, that most designers are organised into professional associations which aim at advancing their art and protecting their members. Some of these organisations have been around for a long time and by taxing their members heavily (and sometimes unconscionably) have acquired assets. The roughly 5000 (not 8000) members of the RAIA who pay full dues are a case in point. The Craft Council is not quite so old, and it too has acquired a secretariat office, galleries and a glossy journal – and more power to it. The Design Institute of Australia on the other hand is tiny and almost ludicrously poor despite, again, a heavy tax on its members. (I happen to be a member of the Queensland Chapter Council, so I know.)

Without labouring the point further, your editorial is indeed 'fashioning a . . . case', and a weak one, against design. If only to help overcome attitudes of the kinds you express, there would be strong arguments for retaining and encouraging a Design Arts Board. However there are other and stronger arguments. Design, as on other occasions craftsmen, painters and sculptors are fond of pointing out, can and often does provide a bridge between those arts and the mass audience. And it is in itself an important part of culture, of the attempt to create a life which has quality and not mere quantity.

Tom Heath
Head, School of the Built Environment,
Queensland Institute of Technology and Editor,
Architecture Australia

To the Editor

The editorial in the Winter 1985/2 edition of Craft Australia gives a very misleading picture of the design scene in Australia.

The impression given by Mr Bogle is that huge amounts of tax payers' money is used to provide luxury living for Australia's design profession. This is far from the truth. Australian governments, state and federal, provide approximately six cents per head of population for the promotion of design in the form of grants to the Design Arts Board and the Design Council. The crafts in Australia are subsidised to the tune of approximately 30 cents per head of population.

The Industrial Design Council of Australia received the 'generous' Commonwealth grant of $190,000 last financial year; hardly extravagant for an organisation which creates employment, increases exports and provides a better quality of life for Australians.

E. E. Rothschild
National Director
Industrial Design Council of Australia

To the Editor:

Craft Australia in its winter issue editorial wants to dismantle the Design Arts Board. Its main reason is that scarce arts dollars should not be spent on 'commercial' design but provided to the crafts and visual arts – which presumably are not 'commercial'? It says the Board's clients are architects, engineers, fashion and textile designers, graphic designers, industrial designers, landscape architects and planners.

WRONG!

The Board's clients are all Australians who benefit from better design whether in the built environment, in manufacturing industry or in other areas of design endeavour, including the crafts.

The editorial presents a misleading picture of design activity in Australia. Professional bodies are active in promoting their area of design, funded not by government but from the hefty annual fees of their members. The Design Council's reported 'generous' Commonwealth funding is in fact $190,000 a year. The handsome design magazine referred to (there is only one, not two) receives considerable support from the Australia Council (as ***Craft Australia*** did during its formative years). The millions spent on advertising have nothing to do with promotion of Australian design.

Are we really satisfied with the state of design in Australia? Are our cities shining examples of the best in civic design? Is there an abundance of well designed Australian-made products in our shops? Why are sales of imported furniture increasing? Did Qantas *have* to go to a French designer for their new uniforms? Do we really like Parramatta Road?

It is issues like these the Board will be addressing in using its small funding ($470,000 in 1984-85 – a little more than 1% of total Australia Council funds) to raise the profile of design and level of design activity in Australia. Its presence will enhance, rather than diminish, the crafts and visual arts by creating opportunities for greater involvement by craftspersons and artists in industry and in the built environment.

The last thing the Board wants is to take the narrow view that ***Craft Australia***'s editorial has on arts funding.

John Holt
Director
Design Arts Board

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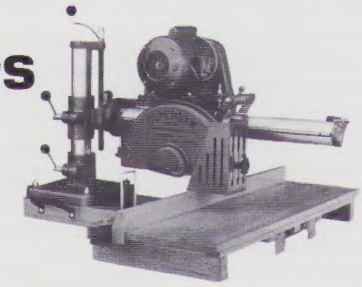

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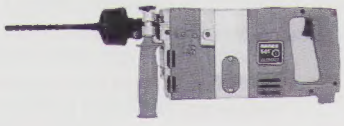

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Photo Norman Wodetzki

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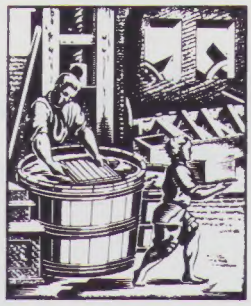

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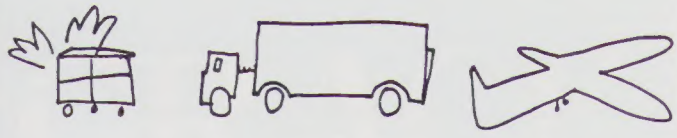

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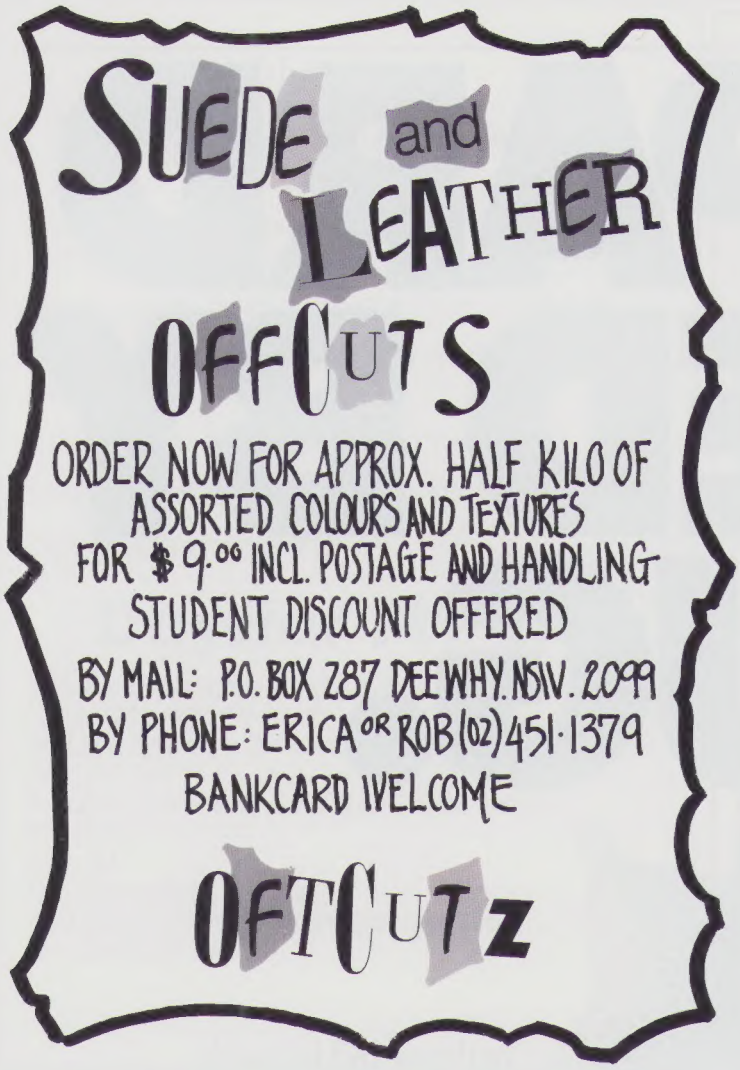
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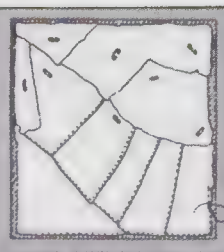

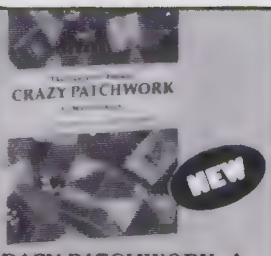

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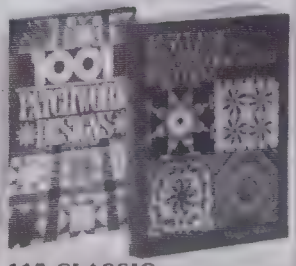

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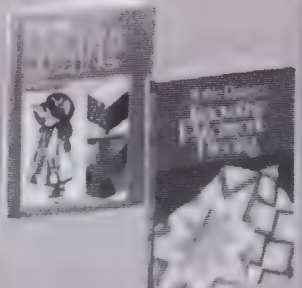

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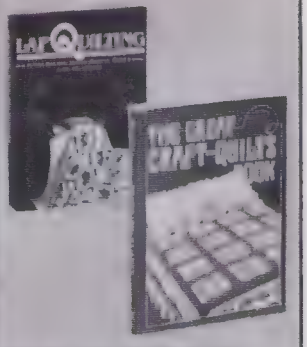

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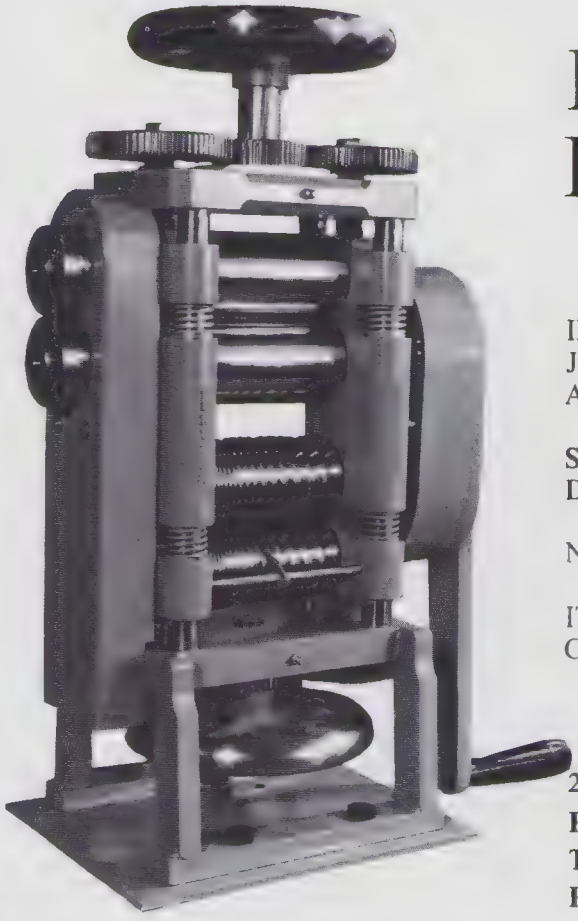

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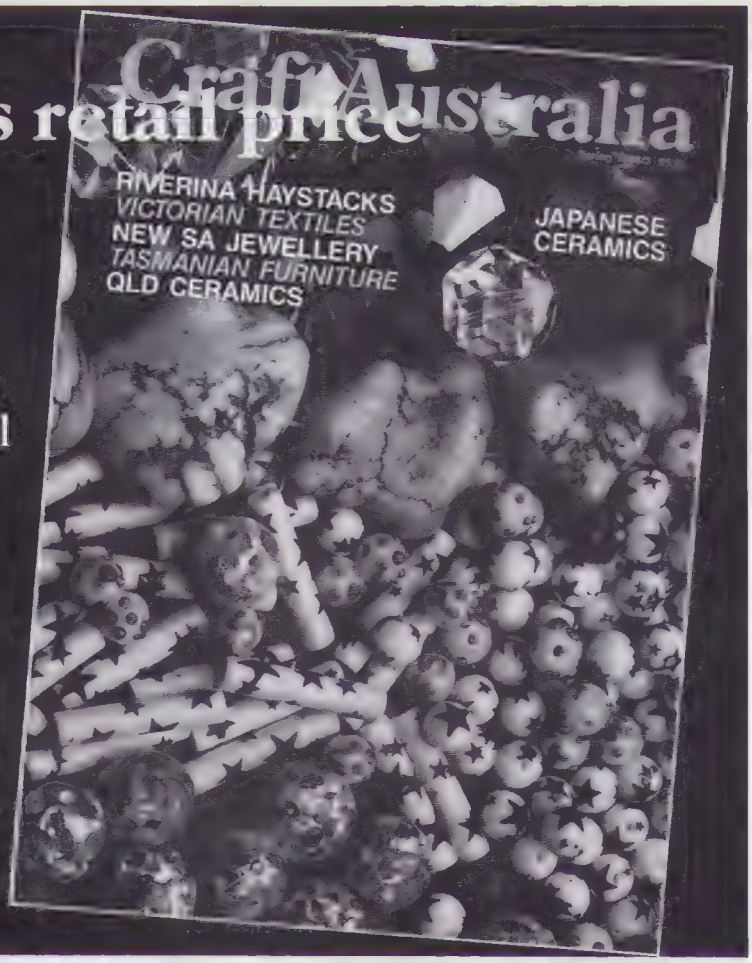

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The Crafts Council is a non-Governmental body. It was established in 1971. It is a Company Limited by Guarantee and incorporated in the State of New South Wales.

The Crafts Council represents Australia on the World Crafts Council and the individual members of Australian Crafts Councils are thereby automatically members of the World Crafts Council.

The Crafts Council of Australia receives annual funding from the Crafts Board of the Australia Council, a statutory body of the Commonwealth Government. The services of the Crafts Council are available to anyone, although membership of its Executive is only possible through the State Crafts Councils.

The aims of the Crafts Council

- **To represent craftspeople** on a national basis by means of a thorough communication network of the Crafts Councils in the States and Territories.
- **To discover and interpret** craftspeople's needs and wishes to Government, funding, educational and other bodies so that those needs may more effectively be acted upon.
- **To press, where necessary, for changes** in legislation or any other changes which can bring about a happier and more prodcutive climate for craftsmen.
- **To arrange,** in collaboration with the State Crafts Councils, exhibitions, discussions, lectures, workshops and other activities designed to instruct or stimulate craftspeople and the general public.
- **To act as a focal point** for the gathering and dissemination of information on the crafts in Australia and overseas.
- **To publish** books, periodicals and leaflets and produce films and slide kits.
- **Through publications** and other means, to help Australian craftspeople have their work known and to introduce overseas work and ideas into Australia.
- To promote crafts, arts and design in Australia and encourage high standards of expertise to be established and maintained.
- To promote and encourage the education of craftspeople and designers and to ensure adequate training facilities are provided.
- To maintain close liaison with the Boards of the Australia Council and in particular the Crafts Board.
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North Queensland Aboriginal Baskets

Kate Khan

The Aboriginal people living in the rainforest region of north Queensland made beautiful crescent or bi-cornual shaped baskets. The area was one of the most luxuriant and least accessible in Australia, stretching from Ingham to Cooktown on the coast, and inland to the Great Dividing Range. No other Aboriginal community in Australia makes or ever has made a basket that resembles this shape in any way.

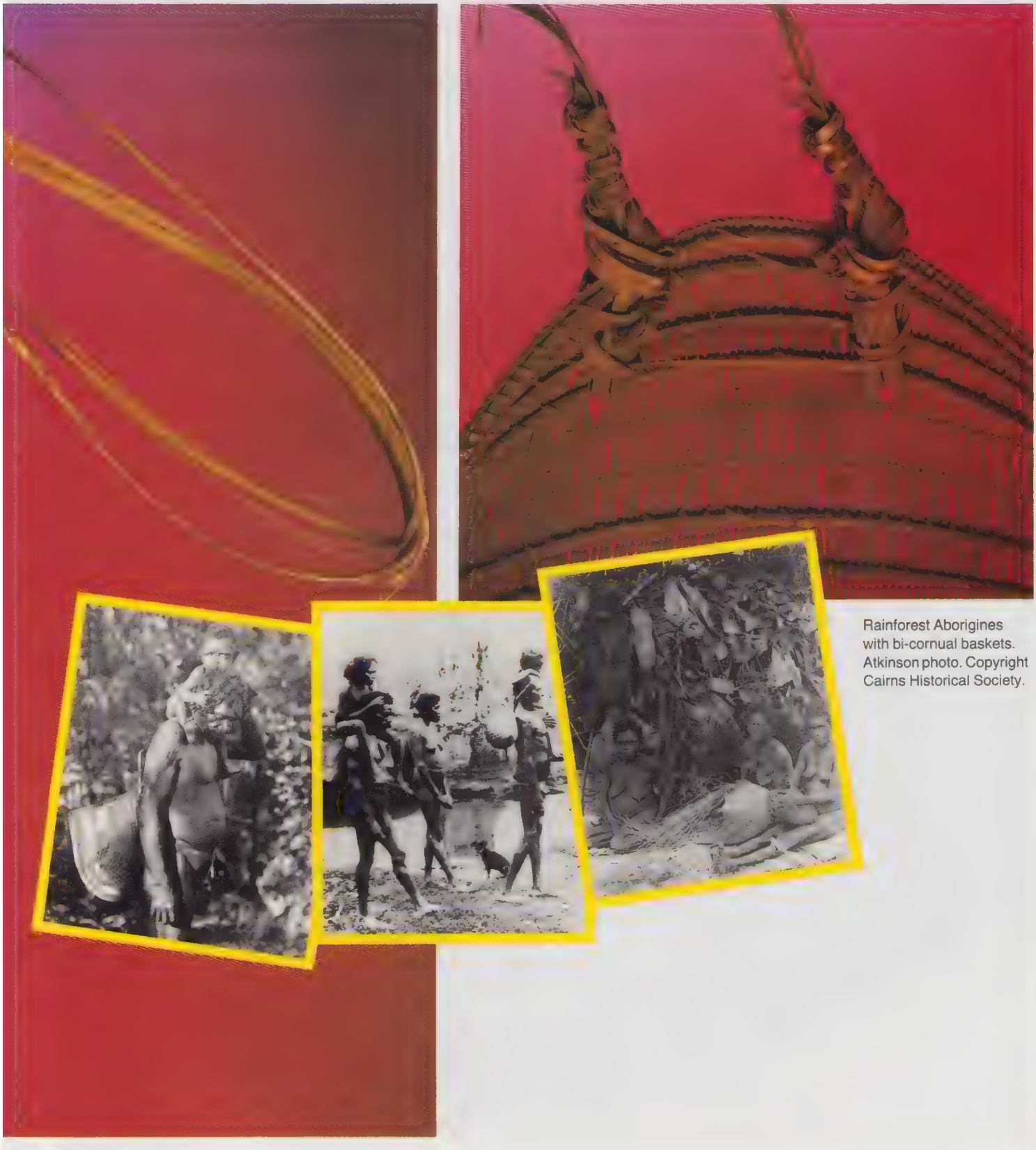
The baskets were made from lengths of split lawyer cane *(Calamus caryotoides)*, a prolific climbing plant of tropical and sub-tropical rainforests. The cane was covered in needle-like prickles and hung from branches of trees impeding movement. Once caught in its clutches, it was difficult to escape, hence its common name 'lawyer' cane.

It was a skilled and difficult job to prepare the cane for use. First the sharp prickles were removed from a length of

hanging vine by rubbing it with a stick. The prickle-free stem would then be clutched in one hand, while the adjoining ring of leaves was pulled down sharply and twisted with the other hand, so that both leaves and cortical layer were removed. More and more cane was thus dragged down and cleaned in this manner. When a length of four metres had been prepared, it was cut away and split by biting and pulling apart with one's hands. Finer lengths were split with a thumb nail or shell and scraped smooth with shells or stones.

The cane was now ready to be taken back to camp and woven into baskets. Lawyer cane was not collected until needed because the basket-maker had to complete the task within five days – after this time the cane could no longer be made pliable by soaking.

Baskets were made by using two continuous strands of cane with several straight basal strands, which extended the entire length of the base. The distinctive bi-cornual shape of the basket was formed by stringing the ends of a



Rainforest Aborigines with bi-cornual baskets. Atkinson photo. Copyright Cairns Historical Society.

length of split lawyer cane like a bow and attaching it by top-stitching to the inner surface. Baskets were strengthened during manufacture by rings of cane attached at regular intervals to the inside by top-stitching.

Two handles (one small, one long) of lawyer cane strips were fitted to the mouth in close apposition and held there by tightly wound thin strips of split lawyer cane.

Anyone could make a basket, if necessary, although as in other societies, some were more skilled than others.

The possession of a bi-cornual basket was an essential item in rainforest life, used as it was to gather and leach foods, especially the Moreton Bay chestnut *(Castanospermum australe),* a year round vegetable staple. Part of the process of rendering this nut edible was to put sliced nuts in a bi-cornual basket and place it overnight in a stream of running water to remove the bitter taste of the nut. It has been estimated by Anne Duke of

James Cook University that a basket with normal use has a life span of some two to five years, but if used regularly for leaching, it soon mildews and disintegrates.

Women also found the baskets useful when foraging for food. The long handle looped over the forehead, and the bag hung between the shoulder blades, leaving one's hands free to collect roots, eggs, seeds and other foods. In flood time, women caught large quantities of small fish with these baskets. When rivers were swollen, fish travelled upstream close to river banks in columns about 30 cm wide and deep. It was a simple matter to dangle a basket into this shoal of fish and scoop up a basketful, wrap them in wild ginger leaves and set them aside to be baked. Mothers often used large baskets to carry babies on their backs.

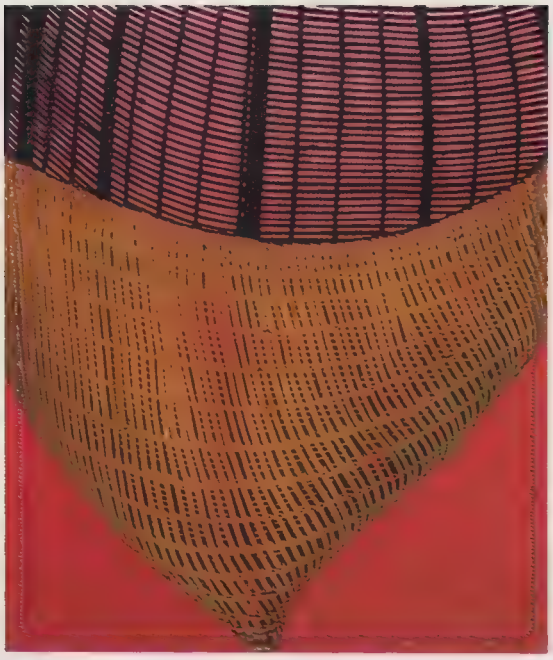
Men painted the outer surface of some baskets with traditional designs using locally obtained red, yellow, black and white ochres. These were used for trading purposes or as a gift to a friend.

Today the largest collection of these baskets is in the Australian Museum, Sydney, some of which can be seen in the rainforest section of the new Aboriginal gallery.

Aborigines had lived in the rainforests, in relative isolation except for the wandering explorer, until the 1870s, when 35,000 European and Chinese prospectors descended on them in search of gold. Invasion of their rainforest lands was sudden, explosive and devastating in its effects. Within a short time, land was taken for farms and small towns with ports and other ancillary services were set up to meet the needs of these burgeoning settlements.

Although the Aborigines put up a spirited resistance, they were too small in number, estimated at about 5,000 in all, and guns were more than a match for spears. By the turn of the century, the economy and society of the Aborigines of the rainforests had completely disintegrated.

The government of the day, in 1898, had appointed Dr. W.E. Roth as the first Protector of Aborigines for the



northern district of Queensland, appointed under the Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act, 1897.

In explaining the duties of this new appointment, his supervisor the Queensland Commissioner of Police wrote:

. . .Directly you have a proper and sufficient equipment you should proceed to Cooktown, make all possible enquiry concerning local aboriginals, numbers, disease, present condition, measurements, photographs etc. Collect all information re their 'walkabouts' and trade routes so as to learn the boundaries of their territories, gather all particulars concerning friendly and hostile neighbours, making from time to time such local collection of ethnological and anthropological interest as is possible . . . (Home Secretary's Office, Brisbane, 4 January 1898)

It is due to the work of Dr. Roth that much of the knowledge of the way of life of these people is known today. (The Roth collection of some 2000 items was purchased by the Australian Museum on 25 February 1905).

It is sad to relate that now, there are but a few Aborigines who know how to make these elegant baskets.

Kate Khan is with the Anthropology Department, Australian Museum.

Partially completed basket with details.

Photos John Michael Day.
Australian Museum, Sydney.

Shards of the Future

Rod Bamford's Ceramics

Nola Anderson

One thing is certain. The closest we mortals will come to history is the present moment. For most of us making history is the relatively simple act of daily living, providing the shards which future archaeologists will uncover. For this sort of history the prospect of future scrutiny is small, its cultural responsibilities are few.

Were we aware of the ruthless significance future anthropologists might put on our most private mundanities, the burden of exposure would be startling. As it is, most remnants are blissfully unaware of their responsibility to explain, define and discuss not only their own mysteries but those of the future. And for that they are the richer.

If all this sounds too much like philosophy and not enough like art, that's one indication of the richness artists have found in the notion of fragments, time and cultural history. For ceramicists there is also a very physical significance. History surfaces as shards, bowls, kiln sites and figurines. The actual stuff of history is the ceramist's medium. It is a subtle irony that has provided considerable food for ceramic thought.

Over recent months in Canberra there have been three exhibitions that have used a temporal/historical perspective. Rod Bamford's work is the most recent and most specific. In previous exhibitions Paul Spooner's ceramic vessels, Simone Fraser's Eastern-inspired works and Graham Oldroyd's symbolic use of boat images and ancient figurines have expressed common fascination with the processes of time and, in some cases, the messages for contemporary society.

Annandale Pavement Evacuation Site. 50 x 40 x 15cms. Ceramic. 1984.

Ferraro's Deposit. 80 x 70 x 20cms. Ceramic. 1984.

This current selection of Bamford's work is in a group show at the Canberra School of Art Gallery in May, 1985 which includes work by Simone Fraser and Philipe Lakeman. Fraser's vessels are less specific about historic symbolism and show a greater interest in the remnants of history for their formal values and their interpretation through the medium of clay. A sense of history pervades Fraser's work but it is not used for social message.

Bamford's ceramics apply a sliding scale to history. Ancient cultural remnants, huge, monumental pottery shards, go back in time. Their isolation from a lost world is nostalgic, their mystical value increased by ancient stories. But Bamford also looks at potential history: today's relics, future shards. Less nostalgia here. Either the overfamiliarity of modern rubble or its problematic implications have quashed any romantic notions.

The earlier works (though all have been done within the last 12 months) concentrate on the past. By using the symbolism of the shard, replete with meanings of past lives, Bamford examines the processes of history and of survival. I suspect the exercise is not entirely nostalgic. One can't help acknowledging that the present moment will too soon be history, and what sort at that?

These earlier shards are closest to the artist's previous work which explored the relationships between ceramic form and decoration. There was a particular interest in Eastern traditions developed while studying with Graham Oldroyd at East Sydney Technical College.

The shards come from the world of giants. The huge fragmented works have outgrown this pedestrian world and assumed the proportions that history would give them.

Bamford's obvious delight in surface patterning has not been wasted. What was once intimate shards part of daily existence, have been magnified into an historical snapshot, enlarged, crazed and frozen in time.

But history is a continuum and while we are free to enjoy the mysteries and ironies of past equations, we must also assume responsibility for future ones. Bamford follows the argument through. What will this society leave to its future archaeologists? For Bamford, our symbols come from the rubble of city construction sites, the rubble of machinery and the rubble of warfare.

The 'future shards' are in two minds about their message. On the one hand there are scenarios which are not optimistic. The obvious threat of warfare technology in *123456* and the cyclical nature of history in *Perpetual Cultural Crossroads* question our ability to solve our own problems. The formal contrast between the beautifully patterned decoration of the ancient shards against the less ornate, raw colours of the modern icons and their mechanical debris reinforce that sense of cynicism about current values. Read through Bamford's formal language,

1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6. 30 x 30 x 20cms. Ceramic, electronics. 1984.

Blue Cross. 30 x 25 x 15cms. Ceramic. 1984.

the contrast between ancient and modern is distinct. There is less room for delicate twists of irony in the modern icons. The imagery is harsher, there are no fragile patterns, no sense of lost treasures.

On the other hand the artist has constructed a certain aesthetic integrity from this society's rubble. *Ferraro's Deposit* has accumulated a dramatic force of angles and planes, flats and ridges and strong colours from orange to blue. Quite apart from social comment, the artist has made a relic that is also a sculpture. It is difficult to read complete cynicism when such a transformation is possible.

That is a nice irony in these works. The shards and fragments, despite their symbolism, find resolution in the hands of the artists. Bamford's presence as maker and his, at times, theatrical symbolism makes his position quite clear from the beginning. He is not imitating shards, he is using the concept to explore the processes within his own society.

Message is important to Bamford. In some pieces the title spells it out. *Post Industrial Relic, surrogate effigy for the Western World* is a relic of multiple machine born parts. There is sarcasm in the title, but the relic is orderly and structured as a machine is wont to be. In this instance we are left to wonder whether premeditated precision and bureaucratic order is to be equated with the absence of humanity which the title implies. The equation seems too simplified, especially in the light of the complex ironies of the earlier shards and the very familiar image of mechanisation.

Whatever messages are received, the work does initiate considerable dialogue through a formal language that is very readable. It is a tight mix of form and meaning. With regard to the latter, there is a second thing that is quite certain. History, alas, is never as simple as you might at first think.

Nola Anderson is a noted crafts critic.

New work from Lyn Tune

. . . Point and counterpoint. It's the unexpected marriage of oppposites that holds me. Ancient materials and new technologies, taut brass and supple fur, pleating and folding and every sort of equilibrium. The wealth of invention and the sharply shafting wit are the start, not the finish, take-off points for splendidly illogical flight. Where to? Off the body and into territory marked by its limits, space both conceptual and actual, social and symbolic. A flight of fancy? Nothing more reasonable . . . Julie Ewington, Sydney.

Jenny Walker

Androgyny, an essential quality for Lyn Tune's body works. Lyn's pieces defy definition, cross sexual boundaries, and challenge preconceptions regarding body decoration. They are designed to be worn as integral sculpture, the body being the only way to display these pieces.

An important aspect of the design of Lyn Tune's work is wearability, comfort, so the piece is part of the body, not an adjunct to it, demanding restricted movements or uncomfortable postures. They extend and redefine shapes, extending shoulders, defining waists, emphasising direction, movement and shape.

Designs range from downright atavistic to coolly futuristic, with an entire gamut between.

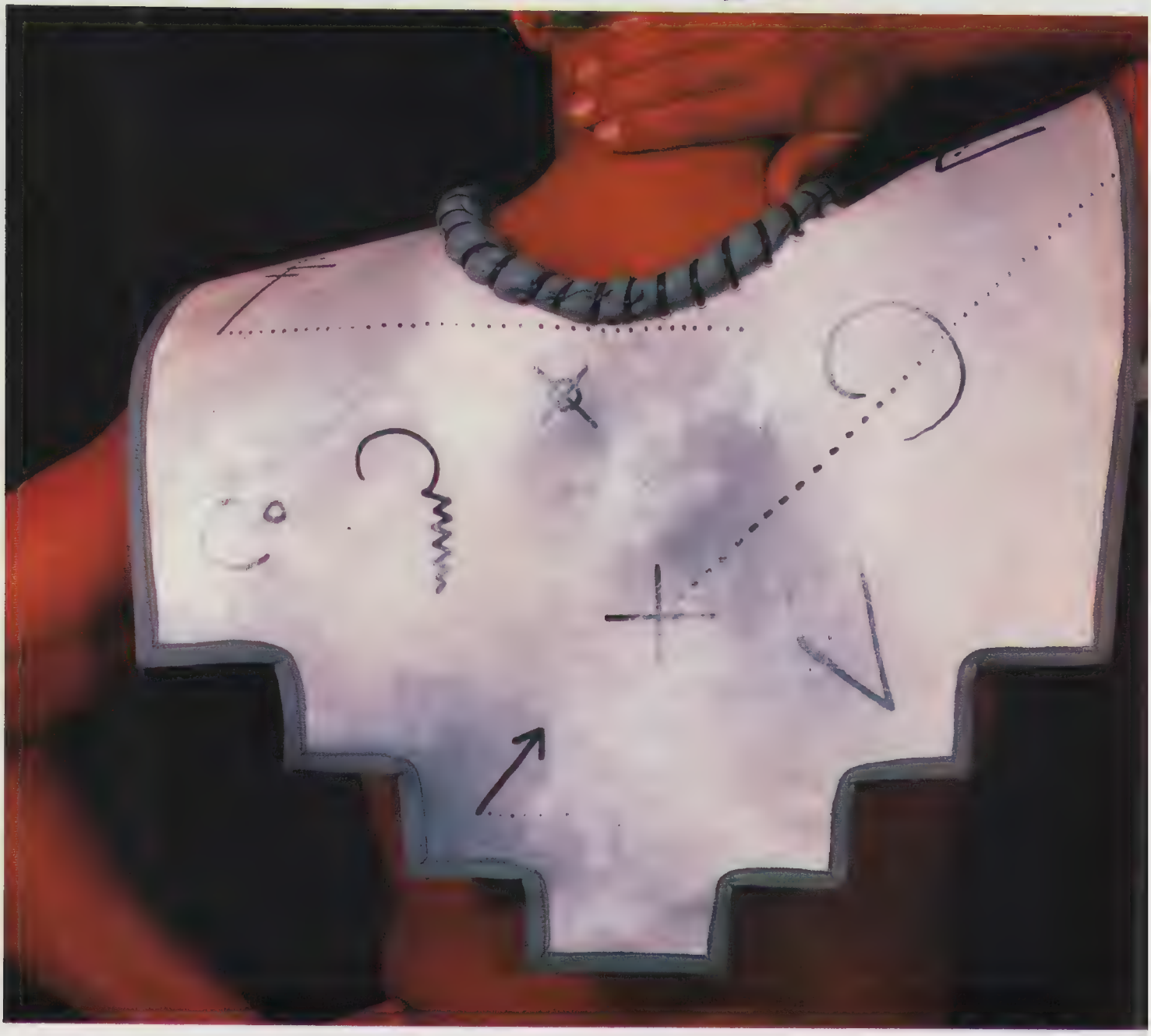
One of Lyn's abiding fascinations has been social display, the ways in which tribal groups within a culture identify themselves to other groups and to each other by use of costume and language. Jewellery used to be associated with conspicuous consumption, size and preciousness. The costume aspect of jewellery has become more important, having more to do with social and tribal groupings than wealth display.

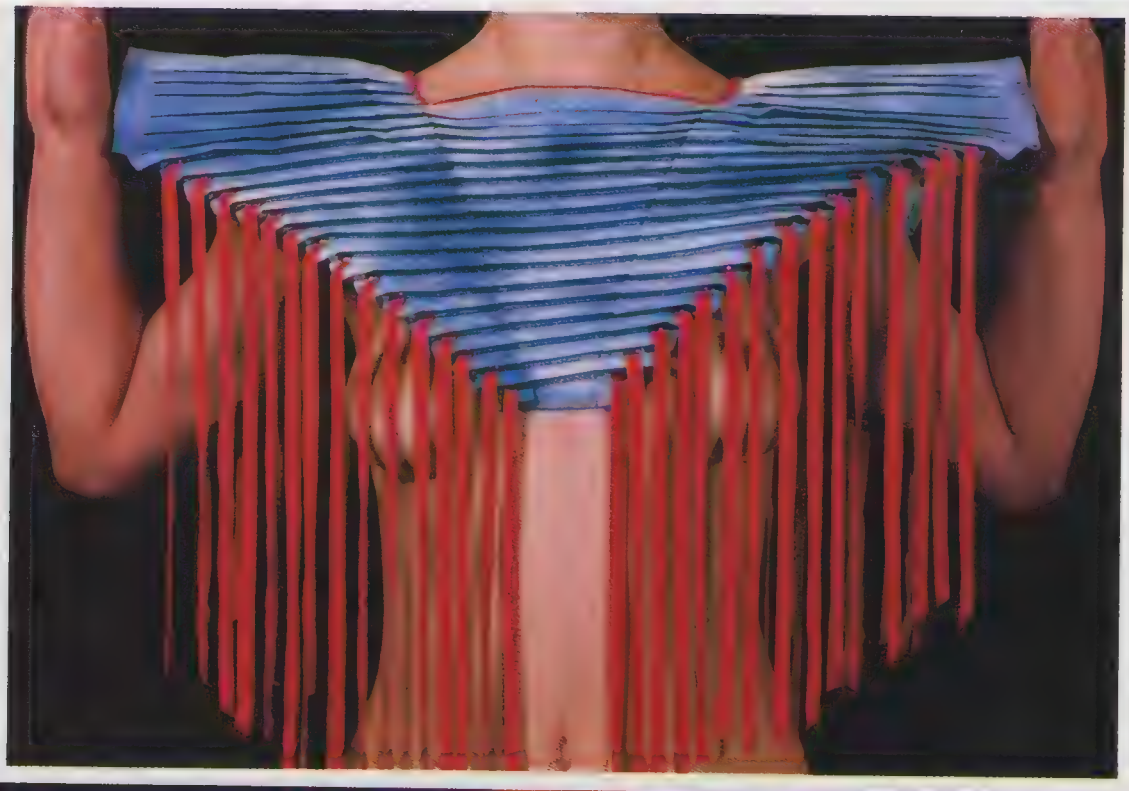
Because of the de-emphasis of preciousness, this type of social display becomes more accessible; this allows more expressive and individual pieces to be made and worn. The options for the wearer of jewellery are now far greater than they have ever been, jewellery merging into sculptural domains, painterly concerns and political and social statement.

Wearability is one of the essential aspects of jewellery. Lyn's jewels are made of some very unusual, but always wearable, materials. One of the more interesting ideas from Lyn's recent work is wearable paintings that are also waterproof.

Looking to the future, Lyn's direction from here should prove to be very interesting, with a move away from body pieces, and more towards abstract, sculptural pieces.

Jenny Walker is a Sydney photographer, journalist and roustabout.





Photos Jenny Walker

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Vicki Torr
The Lure of Glass

John Neylon

Glass. Its thick-muscled curves and pools of tranquility create illusions of strength and permanence. Its singing membranes of crystal express fragility but extraordinary resilience. The craft worker and public alike respond in varying ways to the qualities of glass; a response which goes beyond or precedes the functional or decorative form. These groups come from different directions but meet in the borderlands of stained glass, antique glassware and up-market domestic terms.

If the bills are paid and the aesthetic appetite large enough they meet in the exchange of income for finely crafted glass objects. The catalyst in this process is invariably a sense of kinship with materials and processes which the craft worker endeavours to share. Communication is not automatic and in the best artistic traditions, it may place as many demands on the patron as the craft worker.

Vicki Torr's glass work makes such demands by understanding organic qualities and explicating ambiguities of materials. Her involvement with glass was stimulated by introductory course work undertaken as part of Bachelor of Design studies at South Australian CAE Underdale Campus in 1981. Torr had intended studying ceramics but graduated with a major in glass in 1983.

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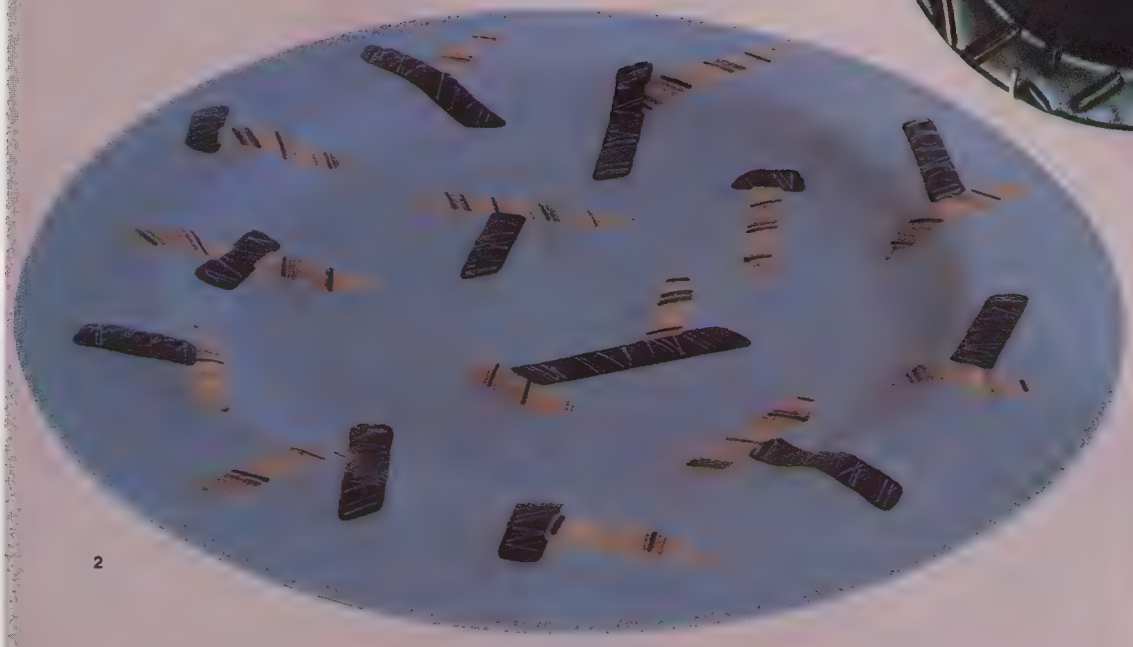

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Earlier study pieces are now looked at by the artist with wry amusement but they did allow her to conduct some useful experiments involving ceramics processes which continue to refine the technical range of her work.

1983 saw the artist embark on a solid production programme working in Ian Mowbray's studio at the Jam Factory, unencumbered by kiln access problems encountered at Underdale. Work exhibited at the Jam Factory's November 1983 exhibition New Edition presented an elegant and somewhat conservative face to the world. Kiln-formed bowls made up the body of work. They were embellished with a variety of design devices, including drawn thread and chip patterning fused into clear or canary yellow glass. However, attention was drawn by the fans, whimsical configurations with random arrangements of drawn threads providing the patterns on the panels. The fan has become a useful vehicle for an ongoing series of technical experiments and it re-emerged in another piece, now in the collection of the Powerhouse, Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, Sydney that incorporates clay, steel wool and copper wire.

The Festival craft fair held during the 1984 Adelaide Festival of Arts provided a further opportunity to establish credentials as a glass artist. A design formula was emerging, kiln-formed bowls with pronounced geometric profiles embodying 'cool' designs of parallel or hatched lines. The use of clay moulds during this period did impose restrictions on the range of forms developed but in the light of the artist's preference for understatement, it was an asset. Within these confines Torr was able to explore a wide range of technical and design ideas.

The gradual destructuring of the formal design system characterised late 1983 – early 1984 work. Straight lines wavered and wobbled into form flow patterns. Hatched designs became increasingly random and broken up by dots. The way was clear for the new season's design coordinates featuring funky all-over patterns and brittle colour combinations. Torr's background in ceramics and her familiarity with *new wave* trends contributed to her recently won confidence in extending design ideas. There are interesting parallels between her glass work of this period and the ceramic sculptures of Adelaide-based

1. 340 x 50 mm. Kiln-formed, fused and sandblasted.
2. 445 mm. Kiln-formed, fused and sandblasted.
3. 440 mm. Kiln-formed, fused and sandblasted.

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4. 245 x 275. Fused and kiln-formed.
5. 220 x 490. Fused and kiln-formed.
6. *Fan No. 8.* 245 x 335 mm. Fused glass.
7. *Fan No. 11.* 230 x 355 mm. Fused glass.

Bronwyn Kemp. Both display an indifference to so-called natural or organic qualities traditionally valued within the respective crafts. They look instead at the importance of manipulating surfaces to arrive at new states.

The ceramics connection runs deeper in Torr's work. A number of 1982 student test pieces had experimented with the application of clay slip to glass surfaces. By late 1984 the artist drew on this experience to make a number of plates which exploited this technique further. Black glass provided the base with coloured clay slip painted onto the surface. Clear glass was then fused onto the upper surface of the plate protecting the decorative clay areas. In a few works glass threads were also added at this last stage providing a surprising degree of implied depth to the surface.

By this time the artist's almost single line development had begun to stack up into overlays of interests. As she comments: 'It seems that every time you do something you can see something developing you want to pursue. It's really so difficult because many of these techniques, you could spend months on them, looking at them and testing different things. In the meantime you've found something else and rush off in another direction.'

Principal among these interests however has been the treatment of surfaces. Characteristically the lines of enquiry have not been overstated and the outcomes provide bonuses for the alert viewer. Torr is presently interested in surface-texturing laid in during fusing and retained during forming. In this manner, sandblasted patterns or surfaces have also been retained. A more recent preference for black or opaque grey glass has allowed the artist to indulge in subtler textural variations than clear glass would allow. The uncompromising nature of the grey glass has also drawn attention to an interest in ambiguities of appearances. At a glance the matt grey and even the glossy black platters and bowls could have been made of plastic or *papier mâché*. Only closer examination, the weight, texture and sound, confirms nagging suspicions.

Surface treatment has also included the partial fusing of small units or chips into surfaces leaving nodules or relief patterns. This technique suits the artist's interest in arranging design units until an appropriate configuration appears. It's a process of 'putting things together' without

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being entirely sure of the outcome. Work based on this technique has included the grey platters with funky orange and black jelly bean patterns in low relief and the exotic black platters incorporating clay slip decoration.

Torr found the transition from student to professional a difficult one. She missed the risk-taking. Her preferred method of arranging design units according to intuition and arresting fusing and slumping processes at critical times have been stimulated by a need to retain links with the creative impulse.

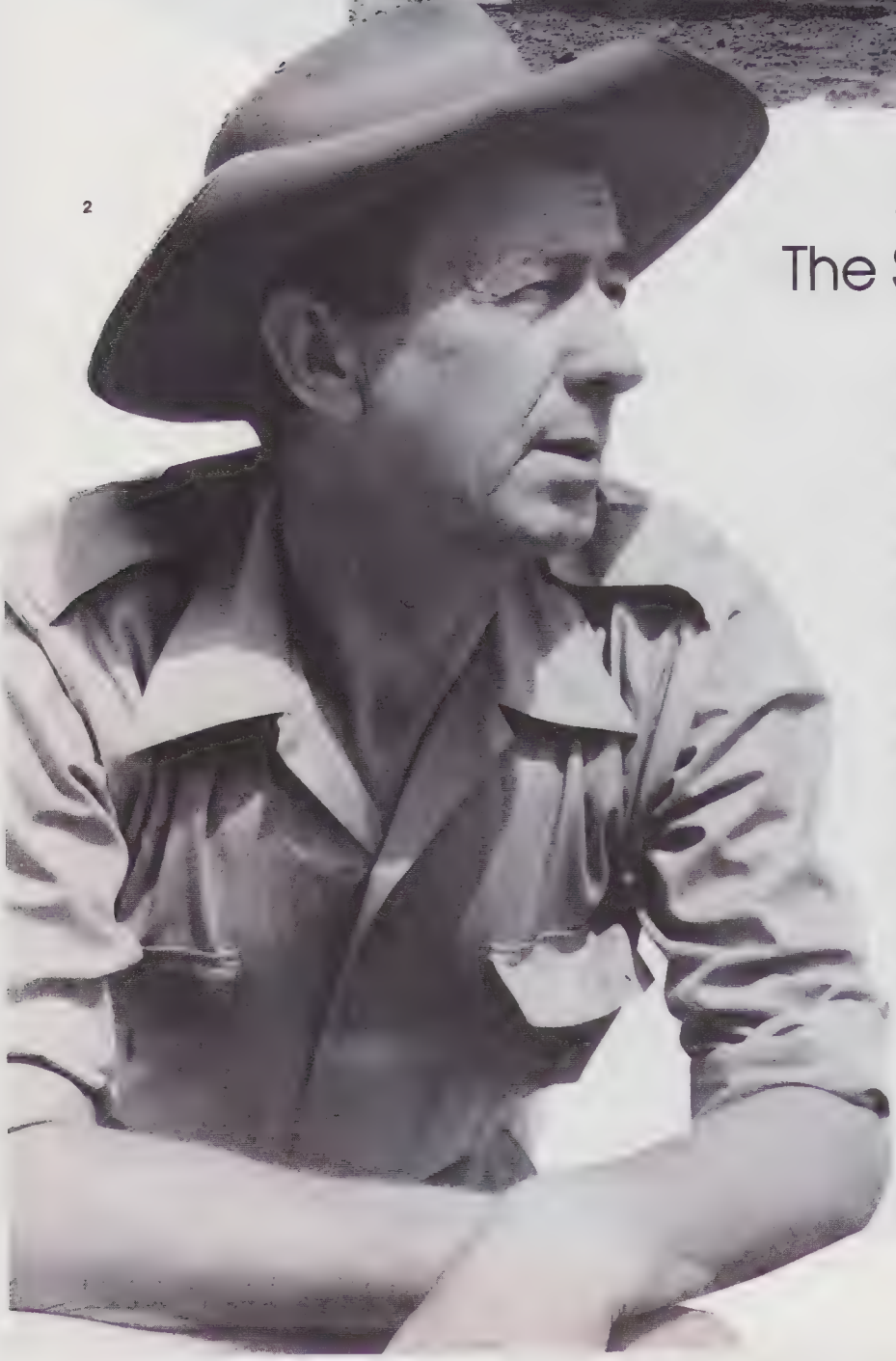
Participation in exhibitions has also sponsored more ambitious work. 1984 was a particularly busy year in this regard with participation in five group exhibitions including: *One and Off the Wall* at the Contemporary Art Society, *National Invitational Glass*, Elmswood Gallery, and *Young Australian Glass '84 Darmstadt*, West Germany. The 1985 exhibition in *The Patterned Edge*, Crafts Centre Gallery, May and The Glass Artists Gallery, Paddington in June.

Torr collaborated recently with Ian Mowbray in the production of commissioned light fittings for the new Australian National Line administration centre Mile End, Adelaide. It was an undertaking which the artist found particularly satisfying involving as it did the use of mixed media and working on a larger than normal scale. As Torr found 'it was exciting and really frightening, taking something on and not being totally sure.' The experience rekindled dreams: 'I'd like to work on a grand scale. The idea of glass furniture has interested me over the last twelve months. Lighting also . . . incorporated with screens and tables.'

In the interim it is the small whimsical objects; the fans, the slumped table forms with their fabricated legs and the filigree drawn thread bowls which must keep the dreams afloat. And that indispensable sense of kinship with the material, it is never far away.

'You inflict your will on the medium . . . sometimes moving with it sometimes moving against it. Sometimes the medium expresses itself and in doing that dictates a whole new area of exploration. Some accidents which occur during the firing of glass open up enormous possibilities. It's all just continual learning from the glass and the surprises it keeps giving. So it has a lure . . . it lures you.'

John Neylon is an Adelaide art critic working with Jubilee 150 in South Australia.



Rabbits to Riches
The Story of Akubra Hats

Jamie Derkenne

What makes Steve Keir devote 53 years of his life to hats? The same thing that his father and his own two sons relish about the hatter's trade?

'I think it's the machines mostly. I remember as a little boy being allowed to visit the factory. I was enthralled, all the hissing steam, the different blocks, shining copper. It's a fascinating game making felt hats. I like the lot of it.' The man is 74 year old Steve Keir. The hats, at least 6,000 of them a week, are Akubra. You're just not redneck unless you wear Akubra. Ask Ronald and Nancy Reagan. They do.

The Akubra hat factory is in the middle of redneck country. Kempsey, NSW, half-way between Sydney and Brisbane, likes to project to the world a cowboy image. It fits. The highlight of the year is the local Macleay Challenge Rodeo. A local council employee who also doubles as a cartoonist for the local paper draws all his characters wearing cowboy hats, Akubra, of course. And when rodeo time comes around, hats are the same to Kempsey as spikes and chains are to Sydney's Oxford Street.

With Akubra dominating 75 to 80 percent of the Australian hat market, it seems to make good sense that the company decentralised its ailing Waterloo factory to the heart of hat country more than ten years ago. The factory now employs over 100 people and business is so good that according to Graham Keir, one of Steve's sons, 'we have difficulty keeping up with demand'.

The whole thing started over a century ago when English hatter Benjamin Dunkerly and his family set up a fur-cutting business in Tasmania. The Tasmanian fur-cutting business was not all it could be, so Mr Dunkerly tried his hand at making felt hats in Surry Hills, Sydney. Soon after,

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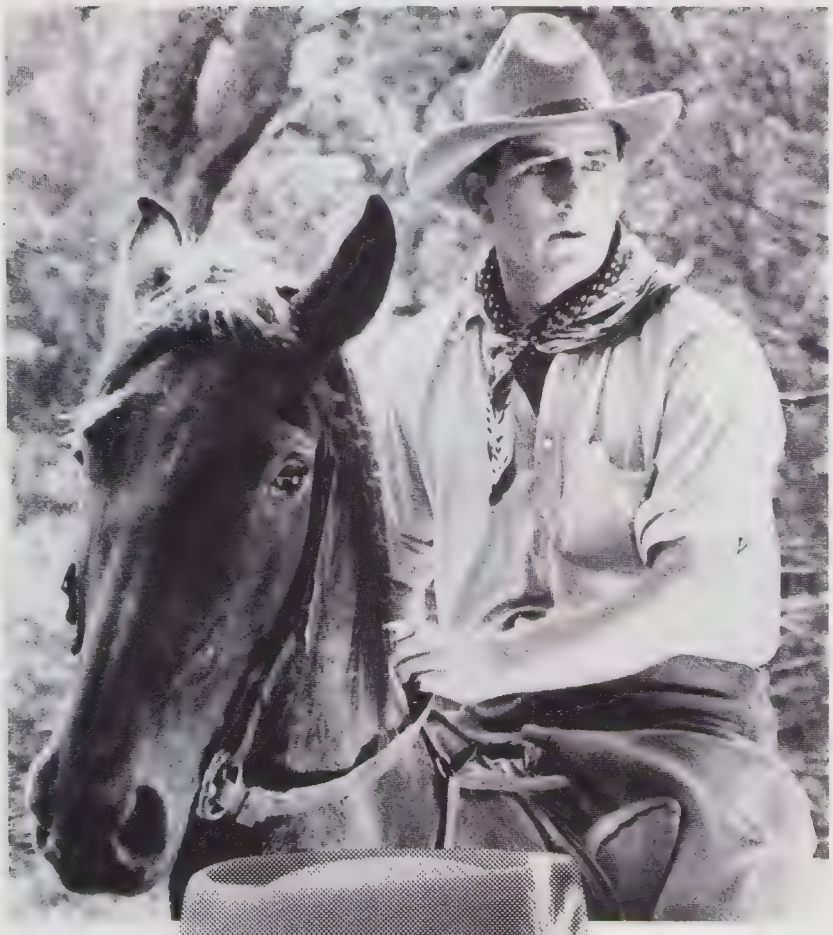

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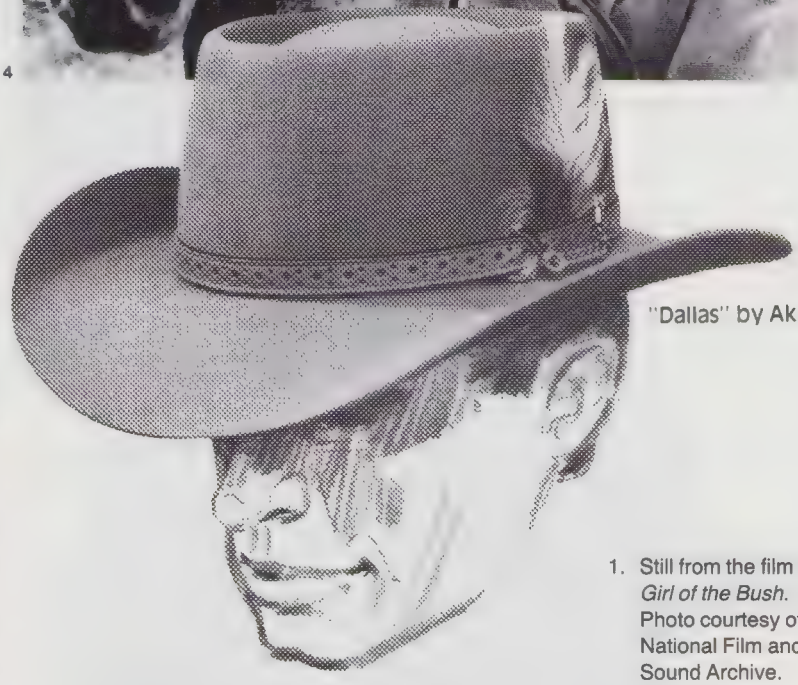

"Dallas" by Akubra

Mr Dunkerly took on a 21-year-old fellow Englishman who had just finished his felt hat-making apprenticeship and who obviously knew his basic business principles.

The young man, Steve Keir's father and namesake, married the boss's daughter and went on to become managing director of the company. Steve Keir II took over from his elder brother, Herbert in 1971. A family success story if ever there was one. And all because of one thing. Rabbits.

Rabbit fur is what quality felt is all about. Subjected to heat, water and friction, the fur fibres literally tangle together. The result is the ideal hat-making material: light, strong, durable and able to keep its shape.

The majority of rabbit skins come from the NSW and Victorian highlands, as these furs have the desirable silky feel and shine. 'The introduction of *myxomatosis* caused us some real headaches for a while, but we managed. Now that the rabbit population has built up again, we have no problems. We try and get as many skins as possible from the Cooma-Queanbeyan areas. The winter coats of the rabbits from that area are exceptional. Ideally we would be using beavers, not rabbits. But with the beaver population, rabbits seem a good compromise.'

Surprisingly, in an enterprise run more by highly skilled craftspeople than factory labourers, Arthur Magill has one of the most important jobs. Part of his job is to quickly grade rabbit skins for the quality of the fur as they come into the factory. He can differentiate up to 75 different types of fur, which means he is to rabbits what Len Evans is to wine. The job's important. The different grades determine the quality, colour and finish of the completed hats.

The skins are then rumbled, treated with an acid solution and machine brushed to prepare the fur for later felting processes. Six barrel knives spinning at 2,000 rpm remove the downy fur from the skins. Then separating machines remove the outer hair and the impurities. Batches of fur, each batch consisting of the fur from about 1200 rabbits, are further refined to reduce them to almost pure fur. Depending on the weight of the hats ultimately produced, each batch, or pad as it is known in the trade, will yield from six to seventeen dozen Akubras.

From the cutting plant, the fur goes to the body shop where it is weighed. Then the shaping and felting process begins using a system of vacuum cones and successive treatments with chemicals, boiling water, cloths and rollers. The machinery is a delight, espeically to anyone enamoured with steam trains. The factory floor looks like the innards of some mutated steam engine. Gleaming metal, the hiss of steam, the eternal thump thump of the engines all combine to create the illusion. You might well think the whole thing is powered by coal. It is: 'Some of the machines date back thirty or forty years, and are still going well. We have to make do with what we've got, though. Machinery like this is a bit of a rarity.'

Steve Keir obviously loves his factory and his hats. Did he ever think of doing anything else but being a hatter? 'No, never. When I was about 16, I made up my mind once and for all to join the business. I went to my father and told him about it. But he wouldn't give me a job. Told me I had to do an accountancy course and gain some office management experience first. I suppose he did the right thing.'

1. Still from the film *A Girl of the Bush*. Photo courtesy of the National Film and Sound Archive.

2. Chips Rafferty. Photo courtesy of the National Film and Sound Archive.

3. Still from the film *Forty Thousand Horsemen*. Photo courtesy of the National Film and Sound Archive. Copyright Suzanne Carlsson, c/- Curtis Brown, Sydney.

4. Still from the film *Romance of Runnybede*. Photo courtesy of the National Film and Sound Archive.

1. Rabbit skins are where it all starts.
2. Loose rabbit fur is thrown onto a conical form in a forming cabinet prior to being felted.
3. The 30-40 year old forming cabinet is copper and wood and would be difficult to replace.
4. The fur has been formed around the cone and is removed for more felting.
5. Felting the cones after removal with heat, moisture and agitation.
6. Another felting process.
7. Putting the crown mould into the felted cone.
8. Brian Tucker, Akubra's production manager with the finished product.
9. Mr Steve Keir Senior, *Mr Akubra*.

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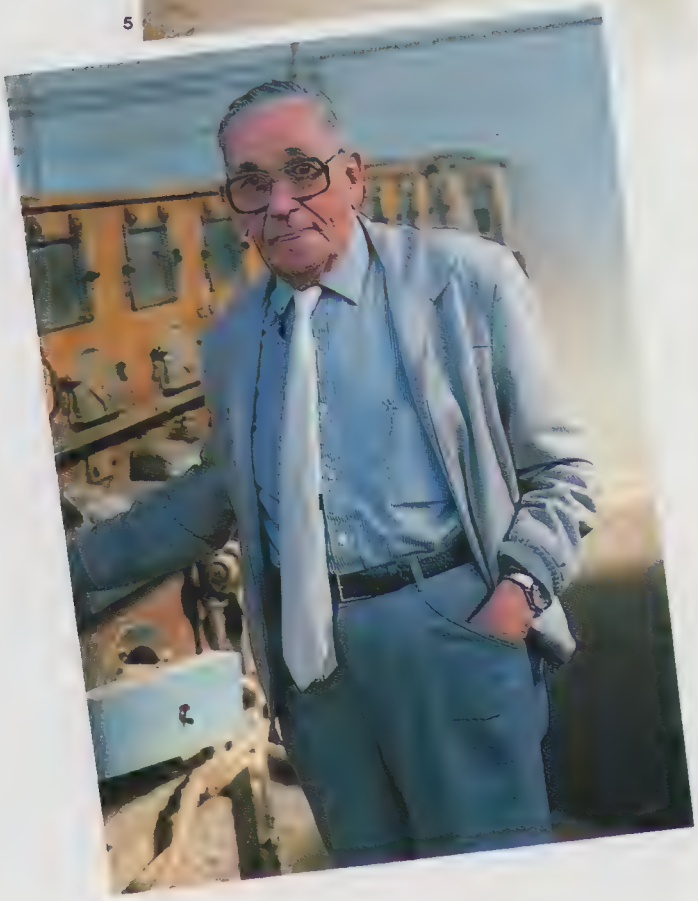
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It was whilst working as a clerk that Steve fell in with another clerk with the unlikely name of Errol. Despite his charm, his fast-lane lifestyle soon earned Errol the sack. Before he was booted out, Errol managed to persuade Steve to lend him five pounds, a princely sum for a clerk in those days. Steve never got the money back, despite the fact that Errol's last name, Flynn, was seen by Steve just about every time he went to the movies in subsequent years.

Steve was eventually allowed to follow in his father's footsteps, despite heavy family pressure for him to become a doctor. Over half a century on, Steve talks of retiring next year. Will he miss his hats and his factory? 'I said I was retiring. That doesn't mean I won't be sticking my nose around this place as much as possible.'

With all those years, and all that experience, he must have seen some changes in hat fashion. 'Oh God yes! Not just fashion changes, changes in people's attitudes to hats. Years ago you wouldn't be seen dead without your hat. Nowadays, you hardly see them in the city. Back in the early 70s, I'll tell you, business was getting pretty crook there for a while. It was terrible. Hats just weren't being worn anymore. I blame it on the motor car more than anything else. You see, with the car, people don't do as much walking as they used to. And you really don't need a hat unless you're outdoors. Fashions have changed a lot too. I couldn't begin to tell you how many changes of style hats have been through.'

One entire wall of the Akubra factory is lined with 'blocks', the wooden shapes which give each hat its profile. There are, quite literally, thousands of them. 'We find it a good

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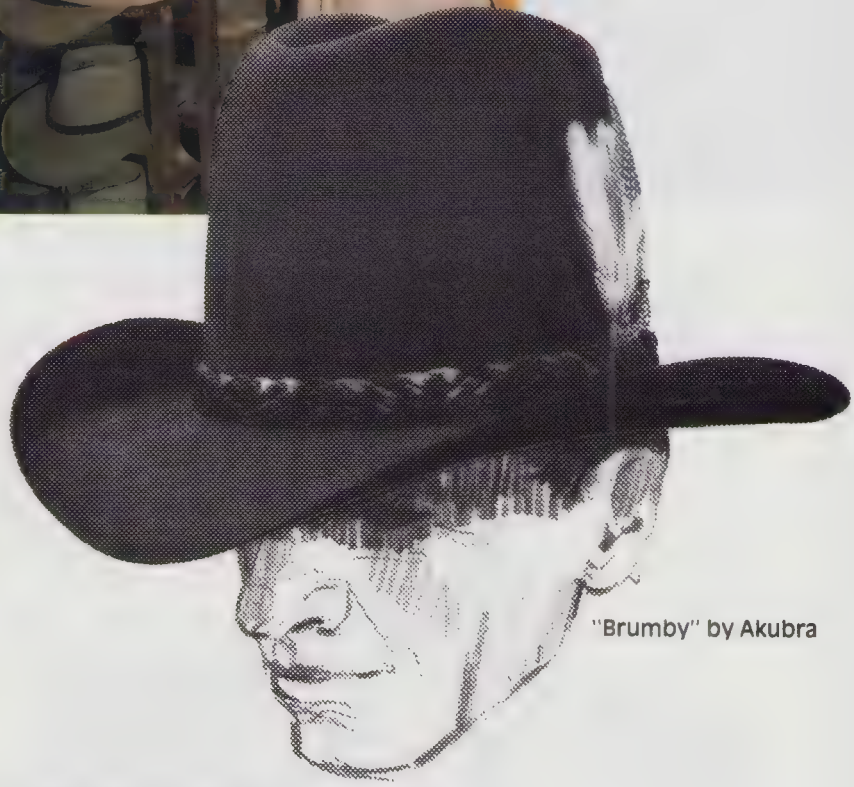
policy not to throw any of our blocks out. Fashions tend to come and go. What might have been in fashion twenty or thirty years ago might suddenly come back in. That's OK, because we'll have the block for it.'

So just how many different styles of hat does Akubra make? 'Well, you see, that's a very hard question to answer. I could state a rough figure on our popular lines, but then, you get some blokes ordering just five or six hats in a particular style and that might be it for the rest of the year. Put it this way. If a bloke came in and said he wanted a hat in just about any style you could name, we could do it for him.' So much for factory-produced goods all being the same.

'When you talk about different styles, you also have to consider the different colours our hats come in. Years ago, it would have been considered pretty outrageous to wear a hat that was coloured anything but fawn, brown or black. Fawn and browns are still our most popular colours, but we make hats in just about every colour you can think of. It's essential to aim for top quality. And styling and fashion must be kept up to date if you are to survive.'

Steve speaks from experience. From a post-war boom when Akubra employed around 500 people and there were 14 major hat manufacturers for a market around half the size of the present Australian population. Now all that's left of the industry is Akubra and two smaller companies.

That's not to say that Akubra has fallen on hard times. Although many city people regard hats as, well . . . *old hat*, things are much different in the country. Australians wear felt hats more than any other nationality in the world.



"Brumby" by Akubra

According to figures released by an international conference on Stetson licensees (of which Akubra is one), Australia is by far the world's largest producer of felt hats, and most of them are sold for an internal market.

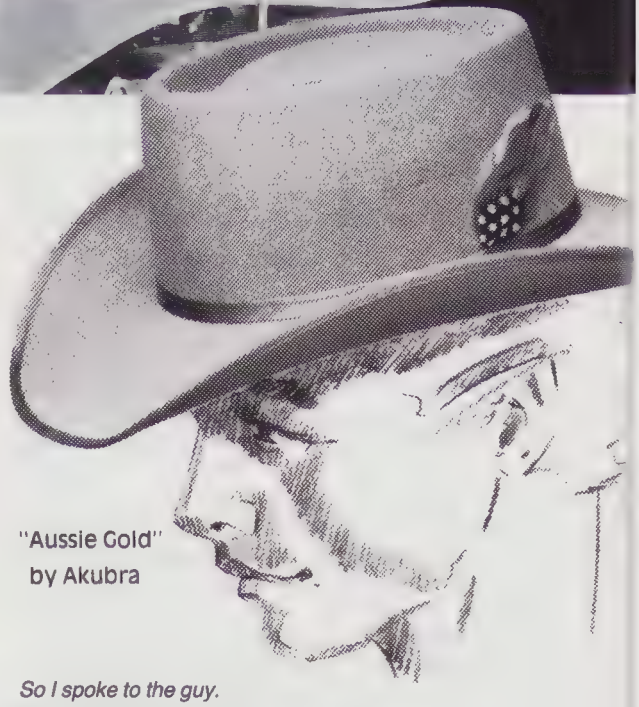
For country people, hats not only make good sense (Australia also has the highest incident of skin cancer in the world), they are part of an image. At any rodeo throughout the country, you might as well turn up naked than turn up without a hat. At the Country and Western Music Festival held in Tamworth each year, practically all the performers

rolled up wearing hats, most of them Akubra. One of the company's biggest selling lines at the moment is the 'Snowy River', named after the hats featured in the film *The Man From Snowy River.*

Such films have brought an *Australiana* craze to countries such as Canada, the USA and Britain. Vegemite and Foster's aren't the only companies cashing in. According to Steve's son Steve Keir Jnr (yes, the company's history boasts a hat-trick of Steve Keirs) there has been an unprecedented flow of inquiries from these countries and elsewhere regarding possible marketing arrangements for Akubra Australian-style hats. Sales in the US have been particularly strong since Nancy Reagan ordered Akubras for herself and President Reagan for Christmas 1982. Reagan wrote to Keir in February 1983, the letter saying in part, 'We are delighted to have these wonderful hats from "down under" and shall enjoy wearing them especially as reminders of your friendship.'

Certainly Akubra hats (the name is an Aboriginal Pitjantjatjara word meaning head covering) have become something of a national institution. The famous Aussie Digger's slouch hat? Akubra. The hats the olympic team wore to Los Angeles? Akubra. Perhaps the last word should go to country music recording artist Les Partell, who in a moment inspired by his headgear wrote:

'But his hat – it stood out
Like a miser's first shout.
It was battered and tattered . . . dog eared.
The front was turned down,
it was torn at the crown
and the hatband had long disappeared.

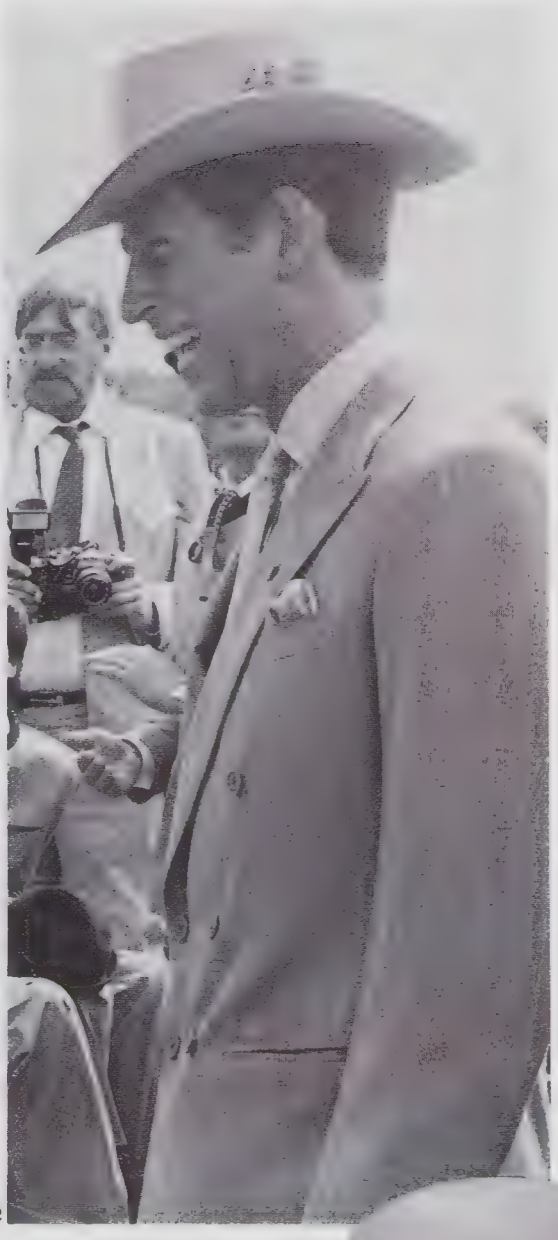


"Aussie Gold"
by Akubra

So I spoke to the guy.
Said, 'Would you mind if I
should inquire of that thing on your brow?'
And he slowly turned round
and began to expound
upon blokes who know nothin' nohow

'This 'ere's an Akubra!
It's not just a hat!'

Jamie Derkenne is a journalist on the North Coast of NSW.



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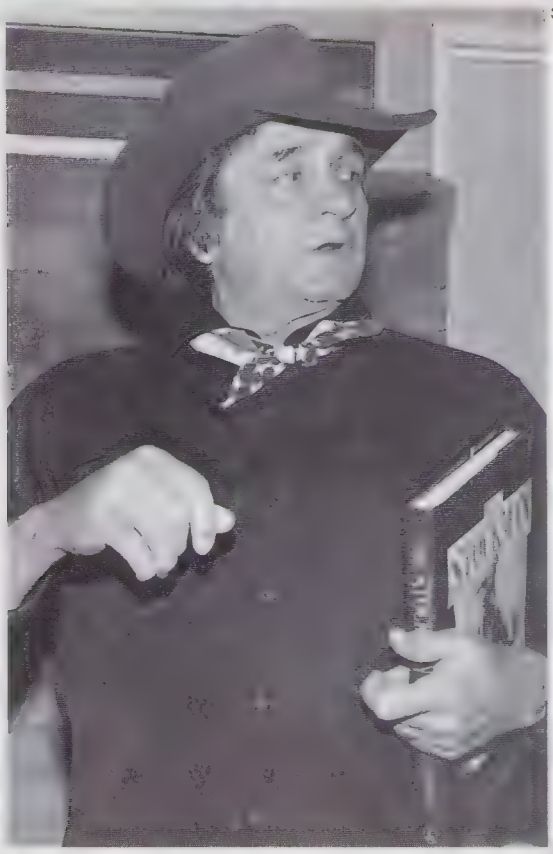
1. Slim Dusty on stage at Mt. Isa, wearing his famous *Sundowner* Akubra hat.

2. HRH Prince Charles. Photo courtesy of Australian Paraplegic and Quadraplegic Sports Federation.

3. Johnny Cash

4. The Prime Minister, Mr Hawke. Photo courtesy of **The Canberra Times.**



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A Feeling of Hovering

WA Potter Mike Calder

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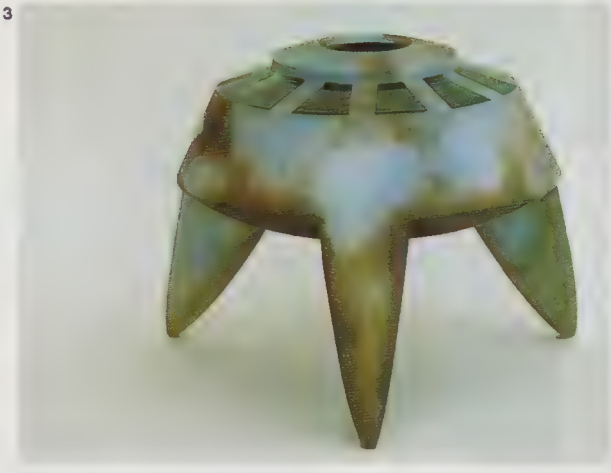

1. *Aztec collared vessel.* 24 x 32cms. Sawdust-fired. 1984.
2. *Bowl.* 6 x 18cms. Low-fired porcelain, smoked in sawdust. 1985.
3. *Tripod vessel*, 17 x 23 cms. Low-fired porcelain, smoked in sawdust. 1985.
4. *Porcelain teapot.* 15 x 21cms. Underglaze decoration. 1984.
5. *Zebra stoneware teapot.* 15 x 21cms. 1984.

Frances Head

There is a strongly graphic quality ot the work of Western Australian potter Mike Calder that gives a ready clue to his early interests and training.

A preoccupation with image and design runs through the family. Two brothers are printers, the third a graphic designer and Mike himself took his Diploma in Graphic Design in 1975, going on to work in advertising. It was initially as a release from the stresses of the industry that he took up pottery, purely on a hobby basis. Only when the clay had gradually taken over his spare time did he realise its importance for him. In 1981, he returned full-time to Perth Technical College to study for the Diploma in Advanced Ceramics.

The transition was not as great as might be imagined 'it was just like extending my graphics work into a third dimension', and Mike emerged almost at once with clear objectives and a strong personal style, apparently without that period of tentative exploration to which most students are subject. In the second year of the Diploma course he was invited to become a partner in the co-operative retail ceramics gallery *Ten-moku* (**Craft Australia 85/2**) and while still a student won several national awards in major invitation exhibitions and had a work acquired by the Art Gallery of Western Australia.

Unlike many potters for whom each work is a gradual evolution, Mike begins with the idea of the finished piece drafted on paper and then experiments with the capabilities of the clay. His teapots, for example, were at first thrown in one piece, later in two. As their shape developed to the present graceful 'flying saucer' on a narrow foot, slipcasting was adopted as a more practical solution, using a two-piece plaster mould split at the shoulder.

The attainment of light, graceful forms, 'almost a feeling of hovering', is one major preoccupation; the other is surface decoration. Working with a porcelain body, Mike uses colour to the full, exploiting the range of effects attainable with underglazes, brightly coloured low-fired glazes and lustres. Surfaces heavily decorated with graphic marks, in colour combinations now subtle, now rich and strong, are a characteristic of his work.

Also typical are the free-smoked effects obtained by sawdust firing. Despite their greater unpredictability, the potter's controlling imagination is at work here too, as in the *Excavated Primeval Vessels* series where the 'primitive' concept was linked to that of 'primary' colour, to dramatic effect.

The next step for Mike Calder is a year in the prestigious postgraduate ceramics course at London's Royal College of Art. Taking advantage of the College's advanced resources and industrial base, he hopes to learn how to 'bring industrial techniques back down on to studio level' streamlining the production process.

Mike will be assisted by study/travel grants of $5000 each from the Western Australian Arts Council and the Crafts Board.

Frances Head is an officer of the WA Arts Council.

Leather Lives!

Garry Benson

Leather Works! was the title of the 2nd Australian Leather Conference held in Adelaide in May, 1985. The conference was an unqualified success, judging by the number of dazed leatherites who attended the final celebrations before heading off back to the bench.

It was also a critical success in terms of the works shown in a number of venues throughout Adelaide. The Adelaide public was shown a new, living face of leather in a variety of traditional and sculptural forms which shook any preconceived ideas about its use.

The Jam Factory Gallery showed *Traditional and Avant-garde Leather* in an exhibition that concentrated on the quality work of the Australian leatherworkers. It showed a large variety of styles and content and tended to reinforce the image of leather as a beautifully crafted, well-designed range of work in a mainly traditional role. Indeed, we have seen some of the work of bookbinder Mike Hudson, mastercraftsworker Ian White, Canberra School of Art's Penny Amberg, and ex-Jam Factory trainees Diane MacKenzie and Robert McRae in recent editions of ***Craft Australia.*** Their work continues to grow in stature and style, as evidenced by this show.

This is not to decry the standard and excellence of their work, but it was interesting to see the emergence of work of Jam Factory trainees Jan Simons and Pauline Griffin (concentrating on leather bags) in contrast to Master Shoemaker, George Koleff. George took a total of ten years to gain this nomenclature, 'Master of the Shoemaker's Craft', in his native Bulgaria. Until a heart attack in May, 1983, he had taught shoemaking in Adelaide and in mid-1984 he resumed working in his Jam Factory Workshop. His boots are outstanding examples of European traditions wedded to the Australian Leather scene.

Johnny Cadell comes from a different background. A former filmstar, stockman, horse breaker, rough rider and policeman, he is also a legend in his own lifetime for his fine leatherwork. His stockwhips and bullwhips are the things that outback legends are made of. His work is included in National Collections and commands very high collector prices. Johnny is now in his mid-60s, plagued by arthritis in both hands, he only produces work by special request. Collector Roy James lent the whips for the exhibition.

The work of Gay Wilson has a distinctly equine connection. Her first *Equus* piece stuns the viewer with the fury and flurry of rawhide and horsehair. The latter two pieces, worked in kangaroo skin, show the energy released by the process of *cuir-bouilli*, literally translated as boiled leather in the original French. This is a process used in traditional leather areas such as bookbinding, involving moulding and hardening the leather by steeping in boiling water.

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The exhibition of leatherworks at the Anima Gallery was a whole new bag. Or not, after looking at the startling range of work that was presented in this innovative show of living leather. It wasn't that it was all non-functional, or quasi-functional, as Ian White likes to describe it. American garment designer Jan Faulkner definitely produces functional wear and with USA clients like Mrs Willie Nelson, C&W star Loretta Lyn and Mrs Barbara Rockefeller wearing her garments, they must be functional!

It's probably better to let the work speak for itself, but the range of techniques, concepts and departures from the traditional mores of leather's colour, shape and style made this an outstanding and innovative show with an insouciant charm.

Jan Faulkner arrived earlier in 1985 to work at the Jam Factory Leather Workshops and made most of the pieces seen in this exhibition during this period. Price tags of between $2,500-$4,000 would have been even higher if the work had to be imported. Local leatherworkers enjoyed the unique experience of working with an energetic leather artist/designer who has worked in the medium since 1972. The raw energy and colourful flair in the work is self-evident.

Sid Garrison also ran workshops at the Jam Factory. Sid uses slab and wet-forming construction techniques to make boxes, sculptural vessel forms and wall pieces:

'The forms, which are simple but refined, and sometimes architectonic, are primarily a vehicle for surface design. The surface design is composed of incised lines and textures, with the interplay of vivid colours. My imagery has its roots in geometry, but it is moving further away from a harsh geometry. Into this poetic geometry I infuse meaning born through titles and hinting at things in modern life via stylized representations. It is my hope that viewers will find joy, humour and surprise in the total work.'

Most viewers certainly did.

John Flemming masks his leather. The first masks started as a commission to create a series of twelve masks for a fashion show in the South of France. John returned to his native USA in 1981 after four years travel in Europe, Asia and South America. His leather work began in India as a means of supporting himself during his travels. In New Orleans, he combined the techniques he had learnt with the inspiration he had absorbed from the attitudes, costumes and *décor* of carnivals in Rio, Nice, Mexico and New Orleans. These masks are typical examples of his stunning leather masks, designed to be worn and enjoyed.

Mandy Havers also makes masks with leather. Working in Coventry, England, Mandy's work has an atavistic *angst* that immediately appeals to, and sometimes repels the viewer. Strong, primal images of African faces which makes the leather live. Her 'torso' works, (not shown in this exhibition) are muscular montages of leather which astound. Mandy was one of the few people in this exhibition who could not actually attend the conference, but the popularity of her work was evident by the red sales tags.

Rex Longwood is well-known to South Australians. A Canadian, Rex is a sculptor who has achieved international recognition for his innovative work in leather. He has exhibited widely in North America and his award-winning work is part of both public and private collections in Canada, the United States, Britain and Australia. His book, *Leather in Three Dimensions* is generally acknowledged as the definitive work on the subject. He worked in Adelaide at the Jam Factory Leather Workshop in in 1982.

Finally, the work of Ian White stood in good company. Ian is well-known to South Australians as the master artisan in charge of the Jam Factory Leather Workshops. His works never fail to appeal with their votive charm and elegance. The 2nd Australian Leather Conference owes a debt of gratitude to the energy and ideas of Ian White and his committee, who organised a memorable event for leatherites from Australia and Overseas.

Garry Benson is an Adelaide journalist and tapestry weaver.

1. George Koleff. *Texan boots*. Calf and ostrich.
2. George Koleff. *Ladies button-up boots*. Black and white kid.
3. Gay Wilson. *Equus I*. Rawhide and horsehair.
4. Ian White. *Tower Box Two*.

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Photos Eric Algra. Art direction Garry Benson.

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1. Jan Faulkner. *Pieces of My Heart. A Time Capsule* (Rear). *Africa Calling. Tales of an Impeccable Warrior.*

2. Mandy Havers. *Red Head and Brown Head.*

3. Rex Lingwood. *Sculpture.* 19.1.85.

4. John Flemming. *Sculptured Face Mask I.*

5. Sid Garrison. *Bongo Bongo.*

. . .More interesting when I don't wear my glasses. . .

Allison Wiseman

Clock making has come back into vogue of late. Not like those fussy wooden ones with brass pendulums, *these* clocks herald new developments in clockdom. Their materials and styles very much reflect current trends in arts and crafts.

Andrew Jackson and Leisje Clement have been making clocks for three years now. Examples of their work are usually on display in the NSW Crafts Council shop. With it being close to home, I had naturally seen a bit of their work by the time I met them.

But why do they choose to make clocks?

Prior to discovering this particular talent Andrew Jackson had worked as an industrial modelmaker, using similar materials to those they use now. 'But no particular reason to make clocks. Except that they are a useful item, to which the materials lend themselves easily.'

'We used to make lights', Leisje Clement said, 'but there were a few technical problems. And the clocks seem to be popular'.

Some of their clocks rate special mention (my favourites anyway) for their contrasting use of materials and design that create a clever balance. These are the clocks of almost traditional design, yet which are executed in coloured perspex and decorated with bright plastic knick-knacks.

'The columns are from the cakeshop down the road, and the little animals from a local toyshop. I bought them because I like them'. Leisje Clement admits. 'But I found a use for them later'. Between them they list other sources of inspiration as 'architecture, books, magazines – just anything'. Leisje continues, 'My bad eyesight inspires me. Things look more interesting when I don't wear my glasses'.

Considering the upmarket style of their work, their public appears to encompass a variety of people.

'It is really surprising to see who buys our work. We delivered a clock one day to a very conservative looking man, he didn't look like he'd like our work at all. A lot of Japanese tourists buy as well'.

Andrew Jackson: 'It's difficult to find places to sell craft, this is possibly the hardest part. Craft-orientated shops weren't interested, the clocks were seen to be more commercially oriented and less traditional than other stock'.

In the beginning the clocks were sold from an *art déco* shop. Later they concentrated on selling the smaller clocks at Paddington markets. 'The closest we've ever come to mass production', Leisje said.

'There are very few people making handmade objects in plastic. And they're very different, more modern. But it wasn't until we took them along to the Craft Council's Christmas show in 1982 that they were recognised and appreciated as handmade art'.

Their work sells itself. 'We've never been conscious of tailoring the designs to suit the market. We made them because we like them. But invariably other people do and have bought', Andrew Jackson explained.

'It would also be great to do more commission work', continued Leisje 'but we haven't had much so far'.

Andrew: 'Commissions are usually for things we've already made that other people want as well'. Most of the clocks are not one-offs, but they do not view themselves as small manufacturers. If a clock type sells, more are made according to demand. They do not work in 'runs' of clocks as, say a printer would in a 'run' of prints. Andrew Jackson believes if they look at it like that . . .' 'Maybe we could advertise them as limited editions, buy now while stocks last'.

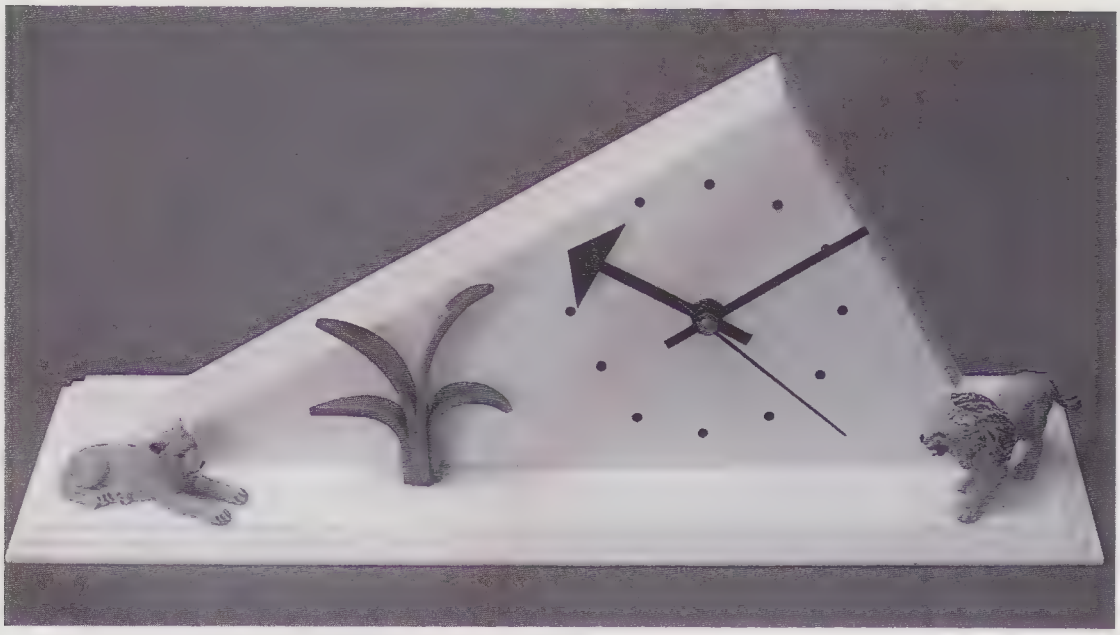
And success?

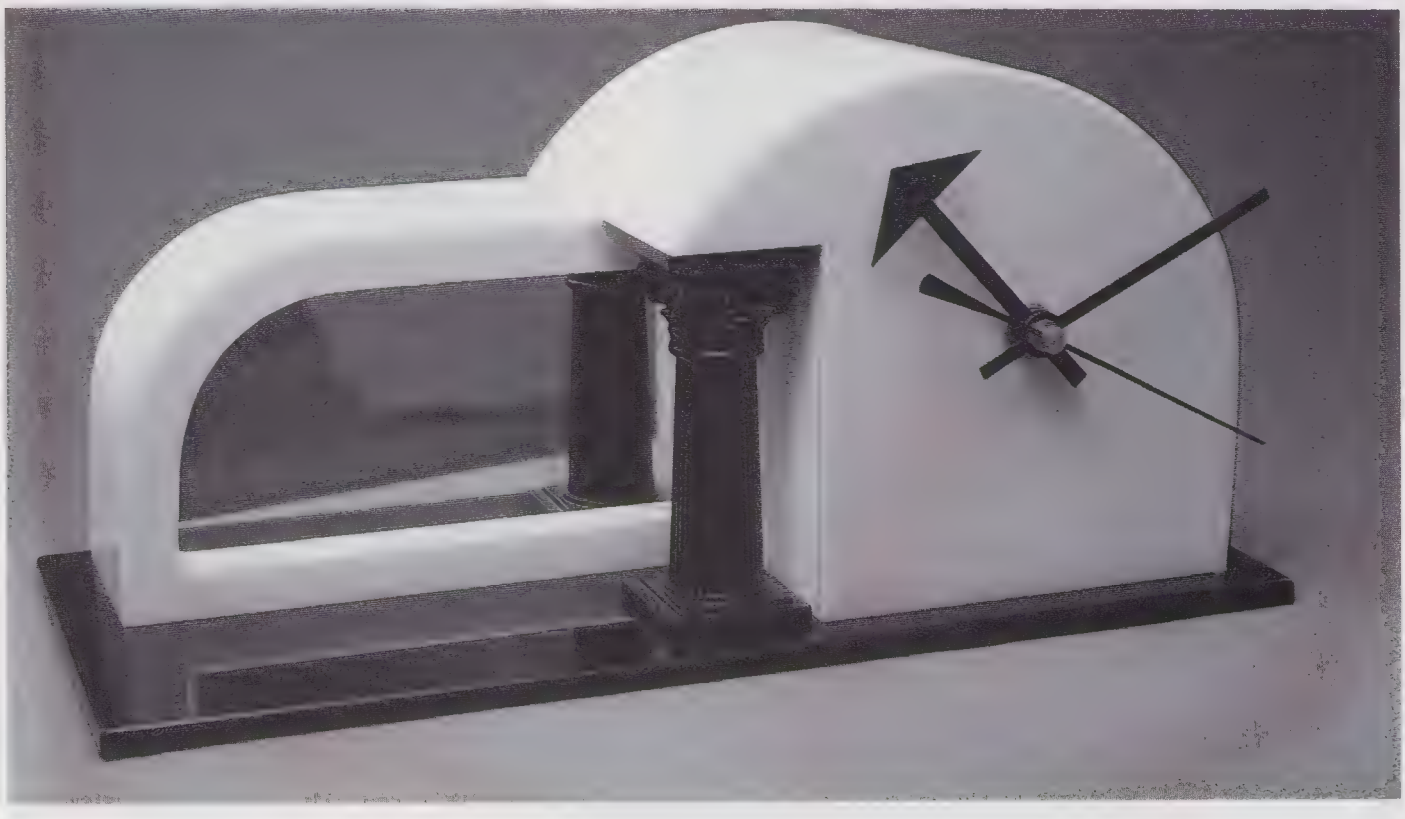
'I don't think we're successful as a business', Leisje Clement admits. 'Clocks take a lot of time and we can't charge as much as we should'.

Andrew Jackson: 'In terms of recognition I suppose we're successful, but in terms of making a living . . .'. And the endless problem for the artist: 'We never know what people think. The only feedback we get is if they sell or not'.

They are currently experimenting with wood and other materials 'in conjunction with perspex'. But sometime in the future they will be producing more lights. Andrew Jackson explains 'The clock market is getting very full at the moment. When we began, we were virtually the only ones – now hundreds of people are making them'.

Allison Wiseman is a Sydney journalist.





TAMWORTH NATIONAL FIBRE EXHIBITION 1986

Julie Montgarrett *Nothing but Memory, Place & Desire* (Detailed) Purchased 1984

AUGUST 31 — OCTOBER 31

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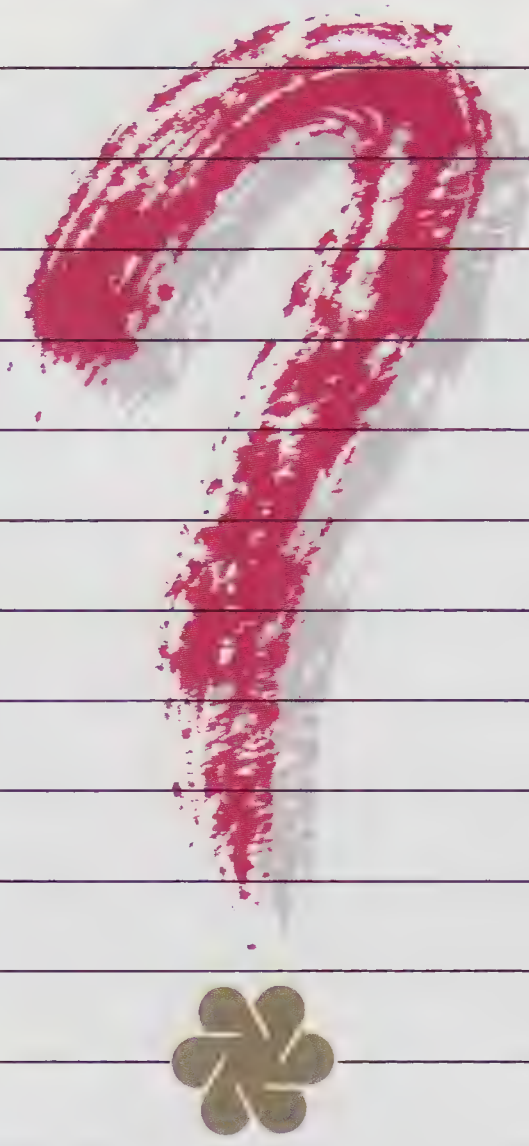

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Jenny Kee meets Margaret Preston

Jenny Kee, Sydney's spontaneous fashion designer recently turned her hand to still-life in a novel exhibition at the Art Gallery of NSW. ***Craft Australia*** went to investigate.

A painting of WA gumtree foliage by Margaret Preston was recreated in a dried arrangement and a number of prominent artists invited to re-interpret Preston's vision.

Linda Slutzkin, a curator of education at the Gallery, is attracted by the academic practice of studying the masters through interpretation; a tradition that faded some decades ago.

This close study between artists is not a common feature of contemporary craft. Perhaps because of the element of chance that so often enhances craft media. Yet Jenny Kee, guided by her media and unfailing taste, captures the elusive greys and coral of Preston's painting as surely as a photograph.

This still-life exercise deserves more attention from working craftspeople and artists alike. A keen visualizing eye is all that's needed to extract the essence of an artwork. The media, as Jenny Kee's textiles reveal, is of no consequence at all.

Considering the success of this exhibit, one would hope to see it repeated with perhaps more craft media. What could a potter or jeweller make of Margaret Preston's still-life?

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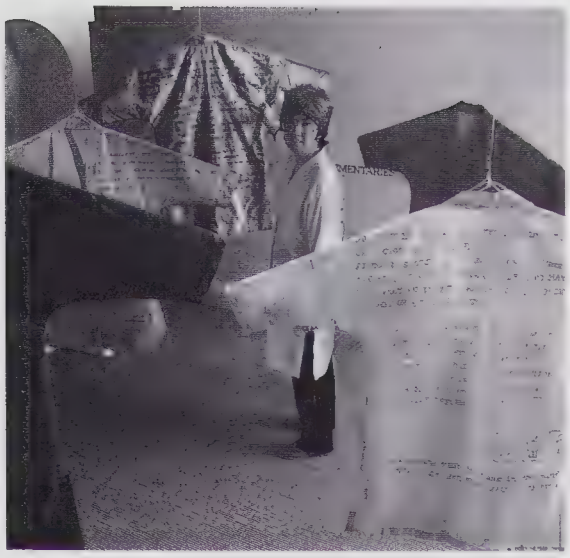
1. Margaret Preston. *Western Australian Gum Blossoms.* Art Gallery of NSW.
2. The painting reconstructed as a still-life.
3. Jenny Kee. *Textile print and jumper.* 1985.



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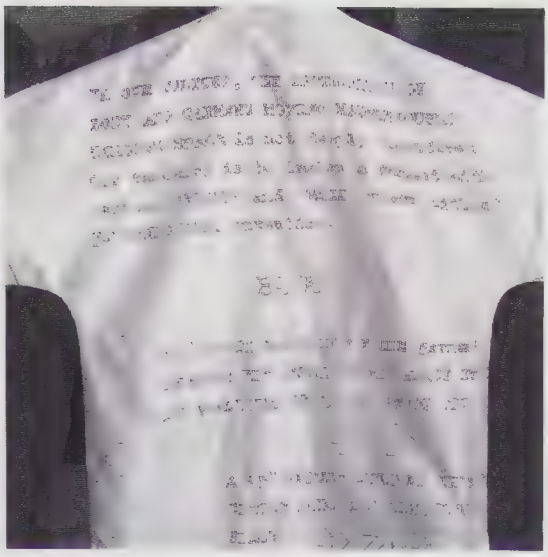

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Between the Sheets

The Work of Lorraine Hepburn

Nola Anderson

Lorraine Hepburn is probably best known for her *Quilt and Sheet Show,* first shown at the Adelaide Festival Centre in 1981 and subsequently sent on tour around Australia. That exhibition's ability to capture attention and provoke response is indicative of both her working method and her aesthetic philosophy: art is a hands-on affair, or head-on, body-on, whatever-on. It offers an alternative to appreciation by spontaneous osmosis and allows the viewer's response and participation to complete the meaning.

This rather popular approach (if not *art for the people* at least art aimed directly at them), and the intense concern to communicate are the most distinctive qualities of Hepburn's work. The ever faithfuls of formalism and expressionism hardly get a look in. The object is used to explore issues not directly associated with surface, texture, materials or form, although these are essential in declaring the message. Personal symbol, narrative and experience form her basic vocabulary in an exploration of personal and social issues where the object remains useful but never supreme.

This leads directly to the thing that fascinates in Hepburn's art, the thing on which it will stand or fall. That is the risk she takes in balancing the formal and objective with the familiar and personal. In the *Quilt and Sheet Show* the images of printed mass media were suitably transformed and isolated by their immense proportions and unexpected location, on the sheet and in public. There have been other of her works though where a less dramatic format gives the viewer less warning about how familiar images can be manipulated. They hold a little more surprise though much less theatre.

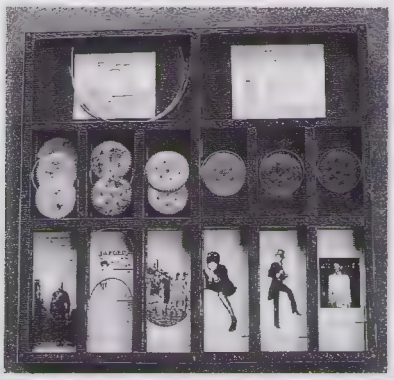
Test Strip to 1980, for example, was made in 1981 while Hepburn was working on the *Quilt and Sheet Show. Test Strip's* smaller scale and more personal content carry the force of the unexpected. Nobody has a ready made response to seeing underwear squashed into a plastic bag. The connotations of red heart and black lace next to it are the more potent for the juxtaposition and the method of hanging three of the 'totems' in their own plastic bags makes everything seem a little clinical. The mood is a finely balanced one.

The format of this work, objects compartmentalised, has a predecessor in a 1979 work called *The Day I Gave Up Biscuits Forever.* The tone here is more lighthearted, but the device of boxing the significant images in sequence is similar. There are ten *Jatz* biscuits, cast in resin, placed in a row behind a plastic screen with carefully spaced openings. You can touch the biscuits but you can't eat them. The biscuits progress from left to right, from completely realistic tones to the forbidden red. Beneath the biscuits Hepburn places a complementary sequence of images from women's fashion history that demonstrate social pressures dictating the personal and public images of women. Above the biscuits are graphs of research done into women's fashion and its implications for sex appeal.

These works point to qualities which recur in Hepburn's work. They exemplify her concern with the familiar and the personal, the presentation of these issues through symbol and narrative; the articulation of social issues to elicit awareness; and the use of mechanisms allowing the actions of the viewer to complete the meaning. (I would venture to guess, however, that not too many viewers have been audacious enough to prod the biscuits.)

A slightly different tangent developed in Hepburn's work during and following her trip to Zurich in 1980 as one of 40 participants in the International Symposium of Metals and Textiles. *The Inn Series, Process and Gesture, Time Frames* and *Dissolve* all to some degree explored the processes of perception through formal mechanisms, viewer participation and the presentation of images in sequential order.

The Inn Series and *Process and Gesture* investigated various permutations of the grid format and the transformation of visual images. *Dissolve,* first shown at Adelaide's Experimental Art Foundation in 1980, extended these systems into a large gallery installation that allowed participants a hands-on discovery of the focus process through a construction of screens and images. The viewer's movement amongst the installation created his or her own interpretations of it. Hand-held screens were also provided. This made the process completely personal.



Viewer participation was used in combination with processes that acted as her symbols for personal experience in other works such as the *Quilt and Sheet Show, Walking Words* and a later exhibition called *Mazes*. In *The Quilt and Sheet Show* Hepburn systematically developed medium and content to a point where both were extremely symbolic and extremely familiar; where once again the viewer must act as participant. Excerpts of text and images from popular magazines and newspapers were hand-painted onto five quilts and ten sheets, double-bed size. Texts included portions of romantic fiction, popular psychology quizzes, ads for escort agencies and coverage of feminist social issues such as domestic violence, rape and women's vulnerability.

The work was both a sophisticated artistic orchestration of sound, context and image, as well as a comfortably accessible statement. You could drop in and have a good read, enjoy the novelty and think about the issues. The work also demonstrates how Hepburn goes beyond social issues to investigate the mechanics through which the artist and the public communicate those ideas. Now a Hepburn hallmark, the research that resulted in the final selection of texts was as much part of the exhibition as the finished products. Time and space were investigated in terms of reading and movement around the sheets. Personal space and intimacy were actively explored during the reading process. The total experience contributed and elaborated its meaning.

This process was even more overtly exploited in *Walking Words,* first shown as part of the Women and Arts Festival in 1982. Ten silk kimonos, each in a single colour relating to its position within a conceptual sequence, provided the material where a series of statements were hand-printed in letters of precisely determined size. Through the texts, Hepburn threw out invitations to consider the processes of personal interaction; the body as an element moving in space and time; the place that language and symbols have in communication and art; and the qualities of communication that art can offer. That was her text. But the very act of reading the kimonos, being drawn to the wearer and moving around to follow the words, created the process that the text itself was investigating.

Later works have continued the dual activity of statement and action. *Mazes* was a playful introduction to the parallels that can be drawn between human endeavour and that classical puzzle. Hepburn constructed the coloured wooden mazes in deep relief to attract touching and solving by the viewer. Conditions could be made more difficult by using her viewing slots that simulated the conditions of a life-size maze by limiting peripheral vision. Compared to *The Quilt and Sheet Show* and *Walking Words* the processes in *Mazes* were less multilayered and the symbolism much more obvious.

In her more recent work Hepburn has continued to investigate the familiar world. The pallet loading patterns for cardboard cartons provided the inspiration for *A Positive Negative,* shown in the *Inside Out* exhibition at the Irving Sculpture Gallery in 1984.

In this work the artist was fascinated by the formal structures of that phenomenon, although there is still an acknowledgement that these structures are a part of familiar daily life that has become anonymous. The exhibition included constructions of cardboard cartons and pallets; a number of wall reliefs of intricate arrangements of stacking patterns and the jargon associated with them; and a printed perspex construction. Again Hepburn draws attention to facets of every- day life by isolating them within a particular context.

Hepburn's aim is not to criticise. In all her work the emphasis becomes affirmation, an invitation to the viewer to re-examine, in the hope this will cause some new awareness. It is a positive viewpoint that has appeared throughout much of her work to date. This, combined with her insistence on the object as a means to produce that communication, provides the distinctive quality and consistency to her work.

On the other hand, it is the non-emphasis of object in favour of active processes that makes it difficult to locate Hepburn within a still very object-orientated mainstream. She has started from a point nowhere near formalist or expressionist issues. These issues hold little significance within her aesthetic framework and an attempt to read the work according to these principles will result in misunderstanding.

Given the terms Hepburn has laid down for herself, any criticial evaluation must take into account the processes of communication that the work implies. To Hepburn the object, if not inconsequential to the message, must not detract from it. Thus it is freed from some of the more traditional formal or expressive responsibilities. The work also challenges the notion of art preciousness and its accessibility is crucial to its success.

At this stage Hepburn seems to be making her own rules, a tricky business for evaluators but an essential one for artistic vision. She is at her best when there is a sophisticated multi-level relationship between the medium and the message and when the viewer is less tempted to focus on the object and more aware of the possibilities of direct experience. What Hepburn does or doesn't do with the object in future work will be of major consequence.

Nola Anderson is a noted crafts writer.

1. *Walking Words.* Sequence of ten garments. 1982. Photos courtesy of **Family Circle.**
2. *Walking Words.* 1982. Photos courtesy of **Family Circle**.
3. *The day I gave up biscuits forever.* Photo L. Helpburn.
4. *The Inn Series.* 1980. Photo L. Hepburn.
5. *Test Strip.* Underwear, solar prints on calico. Photo Brian Oakes.

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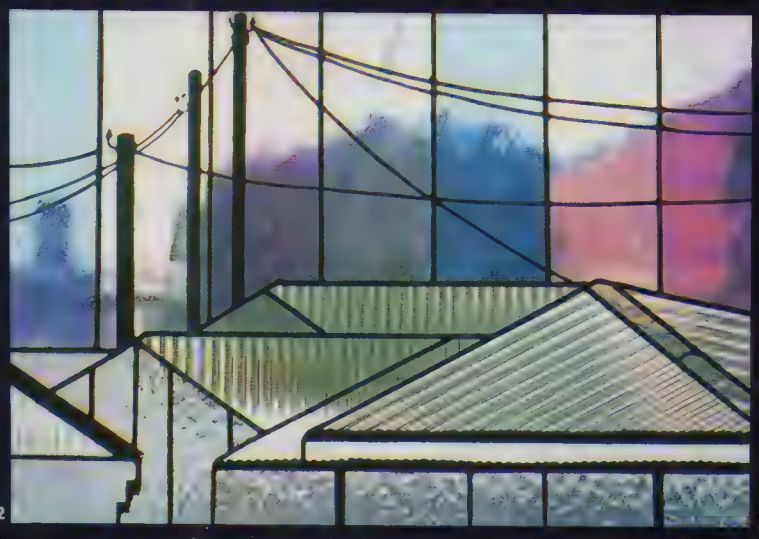

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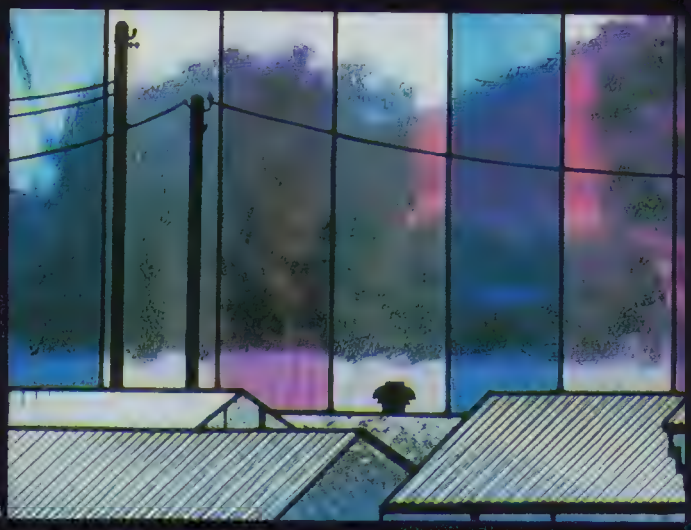

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CLEAN GLASS
Julie Brand

Peta Landman

Climbing the rickety stairs to Julie Brand's tree-house-like studio, there is a feeling of expectation as you teeter above the tree-tops and back-lanes of inner-city Fitzroy. The eccentricity of the setting and the cosiness of her leadlighting studio mirror much of her personality.

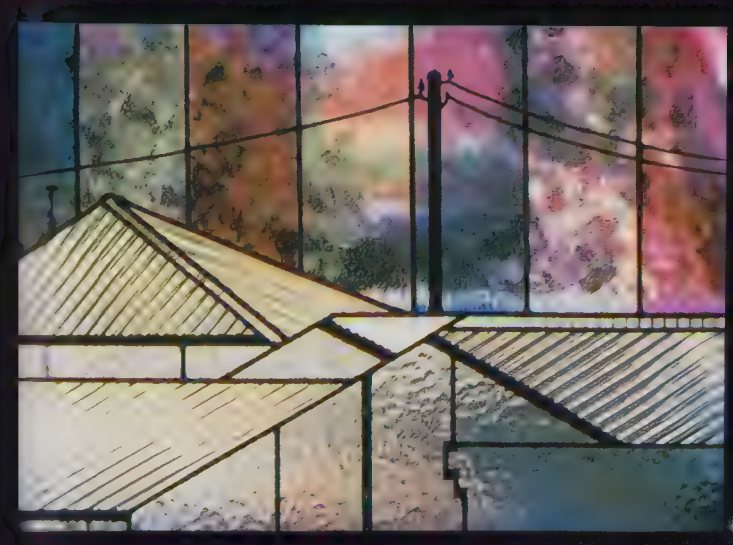
Bubbling with humour and vitality, Julie talks with both animation and seriousness about her life and craft. During her five and a half years working in the Melbourne suburb of Fitzroy, she has seen the suburb move from dereliction to trendiness.

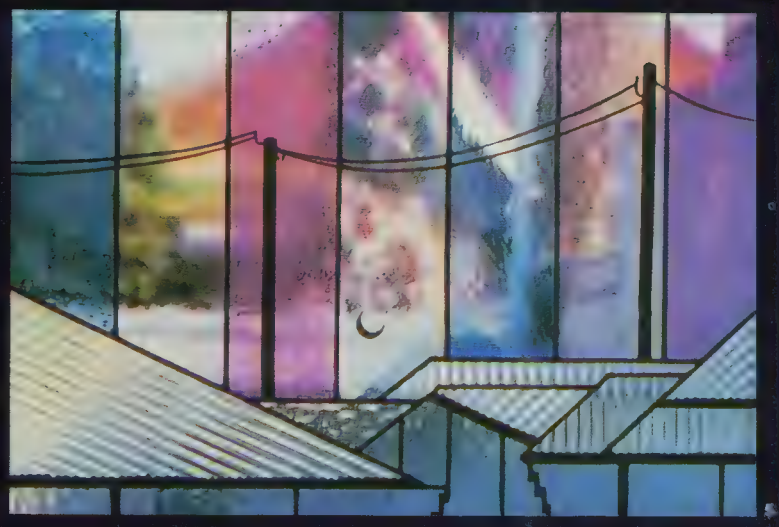
'I like it here. I've had the option of moving to other places, to a studio that doesn't leak for instance, but I prefer to stay. It's nice to see it change. I'm also surrounded by architects, artists and other creative people, it is a good atmosphere in which to work.'

One of her latest original pieces, *Kracked Vanity*, would look at home in any of the 50s inspired shops that line nearby Brunswick Street. It features a free-standing woman made of wood with dress and accessories of glass; a panel with an etched image of a slightly raised venetian blind and an *Art Déco* telephone stand. 'She's very shallow', jokes Julie. 'It is actually a monument to my friend Deanne and myself. I made it with a couple of friends. It has no deep philosophical meaning, it is just good fun and that's basically how I live. I would like to take the idea further, the venetian blind section would make a great shower screen!'

This work is one of the first major pieces Julie has made solely for exhibition and she feels it really forced her to stretch her limits. For the last five and a half years she has been able to survive purely on commissioned work.

'You can't really put stuff in shows and expect it to sell, although much of the commissioned work I do is fairly boring, but I cope pretty easily, drink lots of champagne', she impishly adds. 'The idea of bits of lead around each colour I find fairly annoying. I'm pretty critical of leadlighting as a whole, most of it I find boring. But I have always been able to achieve a good balance of traditional, more explorative work; large scale and small scale, important and negligible; this helps keep me sane. Also the more traditional certainly helps me to become fast and more accurate.'





One recent privately commissioned piece for a newly renovated house in Fitzroy Julie found very satisfying. The four panels extend the theme of inner-city living and looking through the windows you are confronted with yet more roof-tops and power lines. The striking simplicity and strength of the geometric forms are important elements in these powerful images of urban life.

Glass is a medium with which Julie feels great affinity: 'I like using glass, you can do all sorts of things with it, you can push it a long way. I don't, however, use any kiln work, I have tried it but didn't feel particularly interested. I like the cleanliness of glass and when it gets all slumped it becomes thick and gluggy. I like glass that you can see through or is by nature opaque. I add detail by building up layers of coloured glass which I stick on. Silicon rubber is the glue of the century!' she adds. 'I also like to put glass on clear glass without any lead and am experimenting with various types of lock-type glues.'

A collaboration with architect John Farrington has proved very rewarding and stimulating. 'Her partner in crime' as she described him, has enabled her to take on many interesting commissions for private and public buildings, such as a curved entrance panel for the accounting firm of Wallace, McMullin and Small and a forthcoming work for Parkville Psycho-Geriatric Hospital. The entrance panel design is very clean and linear, a simplified *Art Déco*. The foyer for the hospital will be much more lyrical based on the theme of birds in flight.

'My partnership with John is very informal, he has ideas and I can actually make them', Julie said. 'We met at a glass conference four or five years ago. A lucky meeting as he has a real leaning towards glass and I enjoy these larger commissions.'

'It is also good to have an architect who understands the place of glass. As a leadlighter you don't have much credibility, many architects think that leadlighting belongs in the Eltham hills.'

Architecture has been a strong influence in Julie's work. She is always aware of architecture and enjoys its scale. Another major influence has been music. 'I have always by choice worked by myself and need to constantly have music playing to create the right ambience. I couldn't work without it. I mainly play modern material but enjoy all music, including jazz and classical. I seldom buy craft magazines and don't really find myself influenced by other leadlighters.'

Julie did not set out to become a leadlighter, but took a minor in leadlighting during her ceramics course at Caulfield Institute of Technology (now Chisholm). It was then that she came under the influence of Klaus Zimmer.

1. Fitzroy site of Julie Brand Commission.

2-5. Private commission of *four panels*. Each panel 500 x 700mm.

Julie Brand, Deanne Smith and Brian Mellows. *Kracked Vanity*. Lifesize. 1985.

He was instrumental in her appreciation of glass and except for stints as a waitress during her student days, she has worked at nothing else since.

'I have been fortunate in always having enough commissions to keep going. Lately I have really been putting a bit of time into the business side, it has been quite interesting. I don't mind a bit of bookwork. You have to be really practical; to make things that work and are appropriate is part of being professional.'

At the moment she is working on three fun, larger than life-size figures, *Archetype Architects*. Suggested by John Farrington, they are a playful extension of her personality: 'They are for a show, but probably won't sell. They could be screens in an open-plan office, if anyone can stomach them.'

The future? 'I really don't know where I'll be in five years time . Certainly I want to travel, it's part of one's education. I know I'll be in glass and design but doing exactly what I have no idea. Perhaps I will get into more of these installation pieces, they feel more *me*. I didn't exhibit before because it wasn't the right time, the work has to come of its own volition.' Judging by her latest works, Julie seems set to head in her own zany, more individualistic direction.

Peta Landman is a freelance writer and publicist, formerly managing editor of the *Victorian Arts Centre Magazine*.

Signs
Janice Irvine's Quilts

Giselle Antmann

Four years in the Australian desert have influenced Janice Irvine's quilts. The experience of living with Aboriginals is not there directly in her strongest works *Collected Notes* but exists indirectly in the process of production and the concepts that support the imagery.

'All things are energy-manifesting, responding to each other. These notes are to me the image of thoughts in our minds which are like sounds that bounce off things. We are so accustomed to language and our visual and sensual perceptions we forget that they are what we already know. Our form of language and perception is only one form of it, every species has its own. I spend a lot of time paring things down to the essence of nature. Four years of working with women from a culture almost diagramatically opposed to ours forced me to search for an abstraction that was our common ground. That abstraction is something I really love, I enjoy, I fly on it. That's what happens to me when I quilt, I go, I understand things on a different level.'

Participating in another culture can create an understanding of what is common to all humanity. It is also a chance to end cultural imperialism, perceptual smugness and; to perceive differences. For Janice the notes are symbols of the whole perceptual process, rather than a specific language. Other cultures paint figurative realities as well as signs that are not a picture of something. These signs stand for intangible concepts and are understood by the communities.

Janice's symbols are more deeply personal, stand for her philosophy and are perhaps less directly accessible. But her titles and the strength and sharpness of her imagery leads the mind in directions that can release many meanings in the viewer. The painted landscape in *Notes* adds 'the earth as the mother and the sky as the spirit' and

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1. *Horizon Series II.* 90 x 90 cms. 1984.

opens the shapes like windows on a reality as familiar as a field, yet strangely emblematic.

Even Janice's early quilts were wall pieces with hidden meanings. While the format was more traditional and mathematical with influences from Escher and Mondrian obvious at first glance, the elements stood for facets of the self and were a language for representing experience.

For Janice the process of stitching is meditative, a free-wheeling of the mind. Meanings develop as she works and 'you define yourself as you go along.' There is real joy in belonging to a long line of stitchers, 'It's like knowing you've got relatives, it's comforting. We belong together because we all stitch. I am supported by that tradition without having to be traditional'.

She has certainly cut loose from tradition. The influence of silk-screen and painting shows in the use of a white frame and the actual painting, air-brushing and stencilling techniques. There are some three-dimensional elements of traditional stitching but they only reinforce the painted shapes. Depth and shadow are painted illusion and are not actually built from pieces of fabric. This gives richness, control over colour and texture and helps her to break through the static effects of traditional quilting. The dimensional effects, the allusion to landscape in *Marks and Movement* and the *Horizon* series, the austere calligraphic lines, the controlled design would not be possible in the pieces of fabric cleverly collaged. The layers would not so easily lead to a deeper meaning.

Giselle Antmann is a practising artist and freelance writer.

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1. *Marks and Movement.* 120 x 150 cms. 1984.

2. *Horizon Series I.* 90 x 90 cms. 1984.

3. *Collected Notes.* 110 x 150 cms. 1984.

Photos Barry Cullin

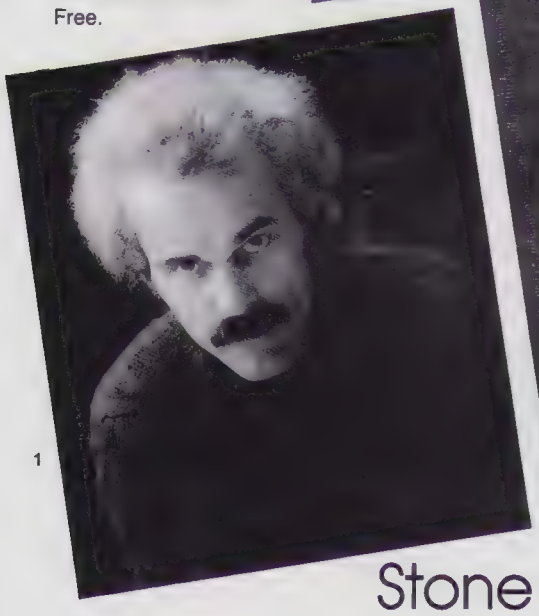
1. *Noel Gray*. Photo Michael White.

2. Manifesto of Form Exhibition. David Jones Gallery. 1979.

3. *Stage I, Series 3*. 144 x 61 x 7.5cms. Wondabyne sandstone. 1978-79. Photo by Geraldine Whitmont and Alan Free.

4. *Stage I, Series 3*. Detail.

5. *Triad*. 61 x 61 x 61cms. 1978-79. Photo by Geraldine Whitmont and Alan Free.



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On Dimensional Logic
Stone carving and a poetics of form

Geoff Batchen

Stone carving is undoubtedly one of the most ancient of human skills. It has played a fundamental role in the culture of peoples as diverse as the Maya of Central America and the Aborigines of Tasmania and has an equally honoured tradition in our own European culture. It is only in recent times that carving in stone has sunk to its present status as a rare and unfashionable artistic technique. Few students today would seem to have the inclination, patience or opportunity to develop the expertise necessary for working in stone. It is conceivable then that stone carving and all the unique knowledges it embodies will soon be a forgotten art.

This situation makes the work of Sydney sculptor Noel Gray all the more interesting. Since 1976 Gray (b. 1944) has chosen to work almost exclusively in stone. Through both his sculpture and his stone-carving classes, Gray insists on the contemporary value of his craft. In his hands stone carving continues to be relevant to the crucial cultural issues of our time. He also argues that a knowledge of carving in stone is able to contribute to our understanding of the art produced by many of the major cultures.

Gray has been running stone carving classes a couple of nights per week for the past two years. Situated at Gosford Quarries in Annandale, his ten week courses are designed to give students an intensive grounding in the logic and skills of carving in stone. Each class contains about a dozen students, some with a background in art but many with no previous craft experience. Each course is based on the study of a classic sculptural work from the past. By reproducing these classic models in stone, the students gradually acquire a range of design and technical skills and learn something of the principles behind their application. Typical projects include a low-relief Egyptian eye, a Mayan *hacha* relief of a warrior's head in an eagle mask, a high-relief baboon mask from Zaire and an Oceanic ceremonial adze head depicting the figure of a shark god.

Under Gray's direction, each project is carefully traced out onto a block of Sommersby or Wondabyne sandstone. The design is then located on the stone with a small flat chisel and a number of work planes secured. Superfluous material is removed with a point and a rough planar finish prepared with yet another chisel, the scutch comb. A

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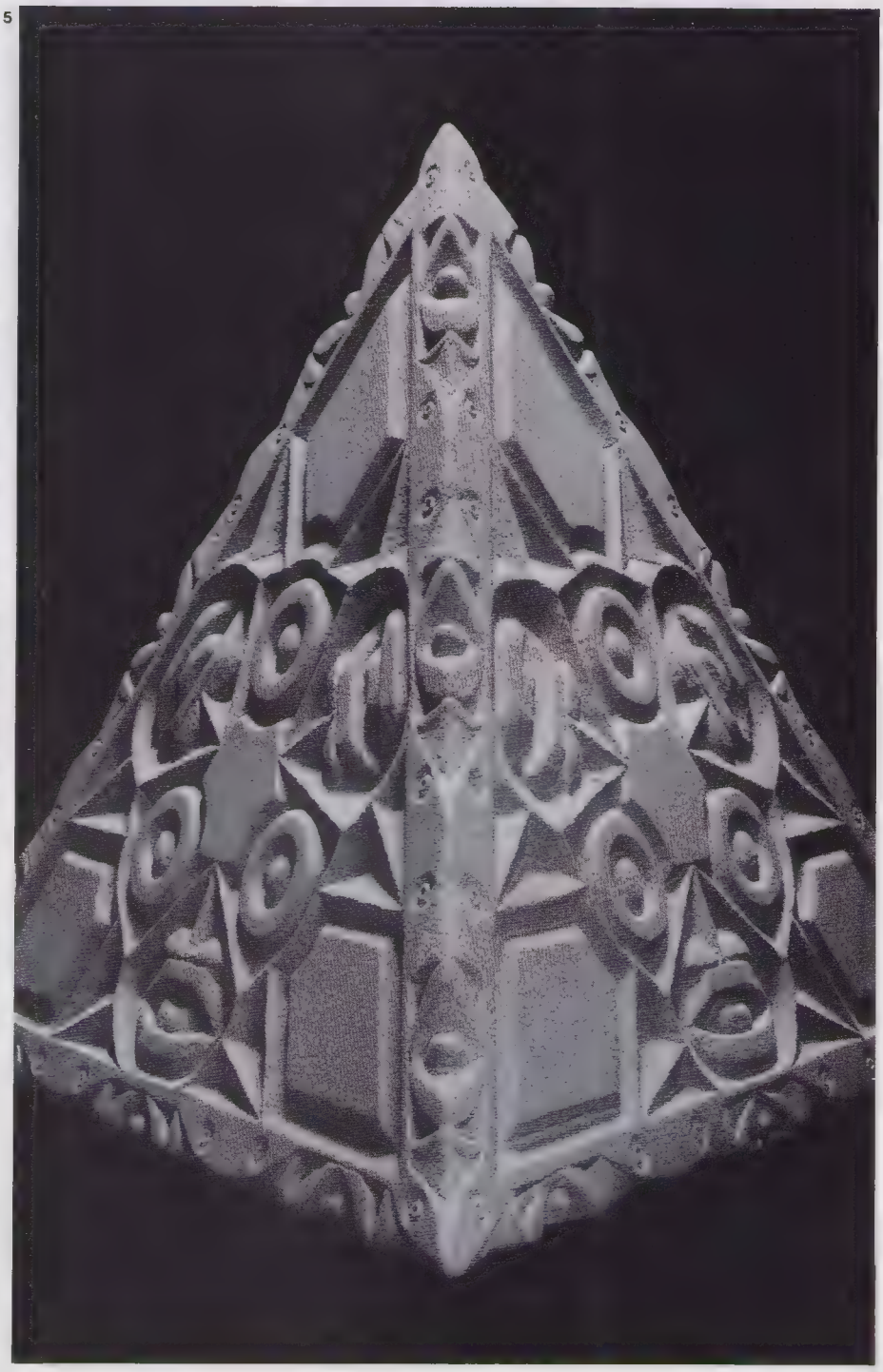

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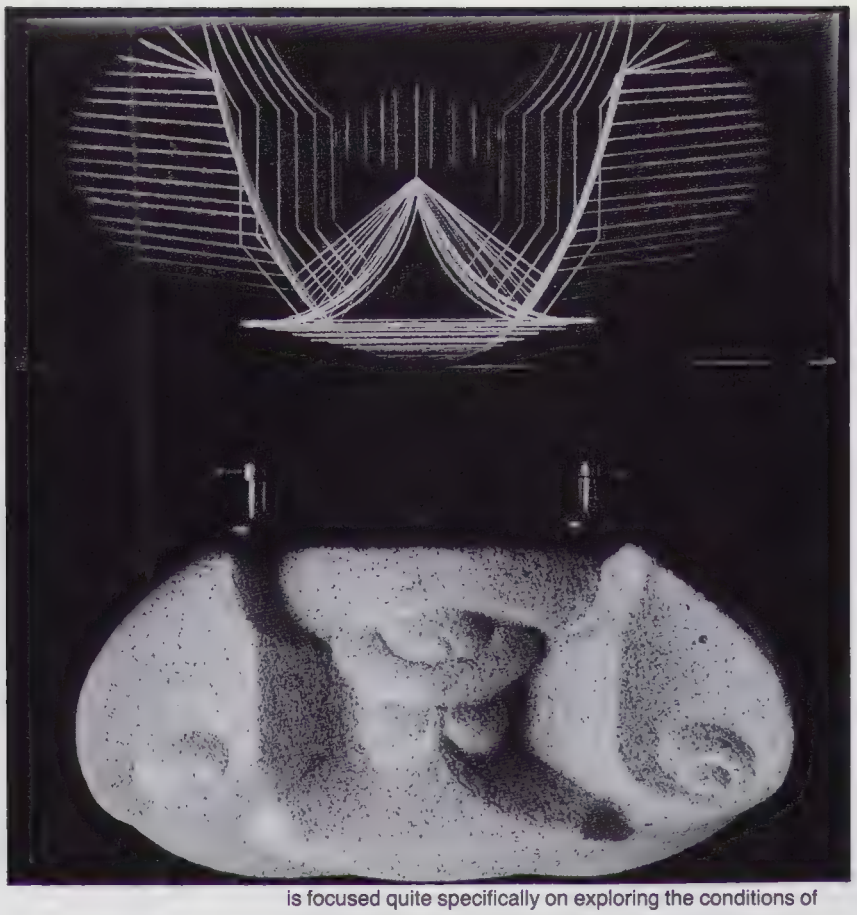
variety of flat chisels ensure a reasonably finished surface, with a small piece of sandstone all that is necessary for any final polishing.

The consistently high quality of the students' work is a testament to Gray's ability to impart these chisel skills to others. Many students return for more advanced courses. Each project involves new techniques and new problems to be solved, progressively extending the students' ability to create their own original designs. In the future there is even the possibility of students working with Gray on major commissions or taking part in demonstrations of their exotic craft.

The practical side of these courses is broken periodically by mini-lectures from Gray on everything from the physics of the stone chisel to the philosophy of the Maya. The aim throughout each course is to stress that stone carving is not just an aesthetic and technological activity but an intellectual one as well. As in any serious art form, the mind of the stone carver is his or her greatest tool. Gray therefore insists on his students grasping something of the structural logic of the ancient works they are seeking to emulate. the emphasis on non-literate cultures is a deliberate one, for it is in these civilizations that sculpture reached its greatest heights. The formal and intellectual complexity contained in these sculptures makes a mockery of the titular misnomer 'primitive' that has been patronizingly foisted on them.

A similar complexity informs Gray's own sculptural work. Stark and monumental, his sculptures appear to allude to a host of familiar cultures without bearing the distinguishing characteristics of any particular one. Executed in series of ten, they are obviously based on the human head and yet the subtlety and systematic intricacy of their manufacture suggests a much wider concern.

Like so many contemporary artists, Gray is involved in a critique of his own representation. In this case that critique



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is focused quite specifically on exploring the conditions of sculptural meaning. In other words, his work addresses the most fundamental of artistic questions: *What is it that makes a three-dimensional representation able to be read as a 'head'?*

1. *Interface 10*. 30 x 20 x 10cms. Sandstone and glass. 1981. Photo by Geraldine Whitmont and Alan Free.

2. *Interface 4*. 41.5 x 10 x 10cms. Sandstone and glass. Photo by Geraldine Whitmont and Alan Free.

Drawing on structuralist analyses from the fields of science and anthropology, Gray speculates on the possibility of imposing a system of meaning on the world which is analogous to that world. He would want to argue, for example, the organic world is one, beneath an incredible variety of forms, operating according to a set of common structural principles (**see D'Arcy Thompson. Growth and Form**). Interestingly he also interprets the sculpture of every non-literate culture as manifesting in solid form these same fundamental structural principles. According to French anthropologist Levi-Strauss, the mental processes that are needed to establish this type of representational practice 'facilitate an understanding of the world in as much as they resemble it'. (**The Savage Mind**, p.93). As Gray sees it, there is the possibility of producing contemporary sculpture which utilizes these principles which is capable of making unusually incisive comments on the world around us.

His series of carved sandstone heads sets out to articulate the dimensional logic of each of these fundamental structural principles. From one work to the next, certain of the sharply delineated masses that make up each head have been systematically repositioned. Despite shifting through a number of planes and axes, the structural relationship between these masses nevertheless remains a constant. Every work is both a distinctive individual and an unmistakable member of the class: 'head'. Every work is governed by a binary structural system in which positions change but relationships don't. It is the particular constancy of these relationships that enables us to read each of these conglomerations of plane and mass as 'heads' and not as something else.

In more recent work Gray combines engraved glass sheets with a similar set of stone heads. The resulting sculpture is a transparent three-dimensional representation of the internal structure of the solid form relationships that make up each head. In this manner these works are able to give image to both the external and internal aspects of dimensional logic. Sculpture like this requires a symmetry and a calculated precision that is made possible only by skill and cool determination. Such determination will be needed. Gray's ambition is no less than a complete and progressive exploration of the poetics of form; an exploration of every aspect of sculptural meaning.

Understandably, Gray's work drew much favourable comment when it was shown in the national art museum of Brazil (the *Museu Nacional de Belas Artes*) in 1982. This major cultural event involving 22 stone sculptures and 50 framed drawings was the first one-person exhibition by an Australian sculptor in an overseas national gallery. Despite this international success, Gray remains more or less anonymous here in Australia. The unusual nature of his work, and his own disinclination to court the commercial gallery system contribute to this anonymity. While it continues, the only means of access to this unusual sculptor's ideas and skills is his twice-weekly stone carving classes. Isn't it about time that stone carving came back into fashion?

The courses cost $135 per ten week term. Bookings for the next course can be made by ringing Mr Gray on 692-0117.

Geoff Batchen is a Sydney based art critic and also the Editor of the photography journal, *Photofile*.

Nice Frock, Shame About the Costume

Australian Film Costume

Joyce Agee

They were filthy, vile . . . we were rubbing a mixture of coffee and mayonnaise to attract the flies. Chris Hayward was wearing a nylon floral shirt and a fake fur coat with a big check with fur collars, and he was always wearing wool underwear. It wasn't quite right, so I got him to wear a women's flesh coloured petticoat. Helen Hooper, designer.

Helen Hooper had already designed costumes on *Norman Loves Rose* when Hal McElroy approached her to design the costumes for *Razorback*, a comedy thriller set in the Queensland bush. The film showed an environmentalist and two crazed kangaroo shooters menaced by a giant razorback boar.

Australian film-costume designers are a rare breed, even from their earliest beginnings. Unlike their European and Hollywood counterparts who enjoyed relative security under major studios with high budgets and large production staff, Australian costume designers worked in obscurity and infrequently in film. Many sought work abroad or designed for the flourishing Australian theatre in the first half of the Twentieth century.

A constant struggle for money, adequate studio space, costume storage and recognition for film designers kept an Australian film costume style from emerging. Despite these problems, early film-makers attempted to present costume that reflected Australian tastes in fashion, attitudes and ideas; often with notable success.

Film costume received an impromptu start with *Soldiers of the Cross* (1900). This film was funded by The Salvation Army. This biblical epic used lantern slides, film, live music and narration. Local girls from a Salvation Army home wore rough drawstring costumes they made themselves.

This engagingly naive costume design contrasted with the highly sophisticated designs of theatrical and stage productions of the period. Often imported from England, the style of these plays influenced Australian culture, politics and fashion. Theatrical producers such as J.C. Williamson were extremely influential and soon theatre

Lucinda Arrighi and Anna Senior. Costume designers. *My Brilliant Career*, 1979. Photo David Kynock.

companies like his entered film-making. Early theatrical troupes even took advantage of the medium to film their repertories to tour outside the major cities.

Many of these early filmed stage productions simply followed the action in one long fixed shot. There would have been little adaptation of the costumes, props or staging for the film. But as techniques became more sophisticated, costumes were tailored for the camera's eye. Film pays close attention to detail, stressing texture and design and this is accomplished in a black-and-white medium with only limited tonal variations.

Margerie West (Mrs Stanley Murdock) who worked as a script and continuity assistant on early silent films, then later on the first Cinesound productions in Sydney recalls that on these early films, the performers provided their own costumes. For Cinesound's first feature *On Our Selection* (1932), a comedy starring Bert Bailey as an Australian farmer), West remembers that the female lead Molly Raynor sewed her own costume. This was no exception. Stage performers often provided their own costumes, living by the adage, 'Have tux, will travel'. This tradition continued in later film-making where performers found casual employment as 'dress extras' in scenes wearing their own gowns or dress suits.

Lottie Lyell (1890-1925), an early Australian silent-film star who began her career in theatre, was often responsible for direction, scripting, art direction and costumes. Limited budgets and small crews on these early films meant production responsibilities were shared, including costuming. Lyell seems to wear the same distinctive riding costume in three different films produced over four years. Such were the pressures of low budgets, continuous small feature production and the relatively interchangeable film characters and plots of these contemporary melodramas.

But this casual approach to costume soon became unacceptable to Australian audiences as they grew accustomed to costly foreign productions with expensive, sophisticated clothing.

A film's success could depend on its fashions. The McDonagh sisters produced and directed three melodramas. Their final film, *The Cheaters* was to be released in 1929 but fell victim to the introduction of talkies. After acquiring a crude sound track, it was finally released in 1930. Unfortunately a fashion revolution that year dated its short-skirted performers and the film was virtually unmarketable.

Film was becoming one of the most significant mediums for spreading Twentieth century fashion. Nonetheless, a distinctive Australian style was emerging. One Australian critic reviewing *The Romance of Runnibede* (1928) wrote, 'The Queensland station hands are not equipped with buckskin breeches and sombreros but dress exactly as people do in real life'. Australians wanted a local product that didn't emulate foreign styles and attitudes.

Though many Australian films concentrated on contemporary themes, there were some high budget 'costume dramas'. Most notable was *For The Term of His Natural Life* (1928) which used an American director and cost £50,000. This film was intended for a foreign market. The plot centres around an English aristocrat's transportation to Van Diemen's land. Jessica Harcourt Thwaites, a young Australian stage actress, co-starred in the production.

The women's frocks were designed and produced by the leading Sydney department store Farmers and Thwaites and many were surprised the film's budget permitted the services of these exclusive designers. The film's budget was exceptional and so was the scale of costume production, so the most economic and practical solution was to commission designers and staff already working in an established shop. This practice continued well into the Forties.

Costume designers interested solely in film costume design had few career opportunities here. One Sydney-born designer, John Kelley (1897-1964) went to Hollywood and working as Owrry-Kelly, he became highly successful. He worked in over one hundred pictures for Warner Brothers and designed for Busby Berkeley in lavish musicals of the thirties. Later he shared an Oscar for *An American in Paris* (1951) and was nominated for an Oscar for his costume designs for the musical *Gypsy*.

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1. *Soldiers of the Cross.* Costume produced by the Salvation Army, 1900.
2. Jessica Harcourt Thwaites, costume designer *For the Term of His Natural Life*, 1927.
3. Jocelyn Diethelm, costume designer. *Strike Me Lucky*, 1934. Photo Jim Fitzpatrick.

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In the late Twenties and early Thirties studios were established in Melbourne and Sydney like Efftee and Cinesound, but both worked on limited budgets and the opportunity for full-time costume designers and production staff still were lacking.

Nan Gurr Thompson, Cinesound publicist from 1936 until its collapse during the 1939-45 war, had a hand in designing a few frocks for *Orphan of the Wilderness* (1936), a contemporary melodrama about a boxing kangaroo. She had a history of fine art and commercial design behind her and quite casually sketched a dress for the female lead, Gwen Munroe.

The actress was so taken with the sketch that she asked Gurr to produce it for the film. It was arranged that Grace Brothers would produce it for screen credit. 'This made the production boys furious', she recalls. 'But the dress was so attractive that the script girl asked me if she could buy it afterwards.'

Costume designers were generally organized more formally. Cinesound Director Ken G. Hall was always prepared to give new designers opportunities. A young art student Jocelyn Diethelm approached him with some costume sketches and he was impressed enough to give her an opportunity to design *Strike Me Lucky* (1934) starring the comedian Roy Rene. Her designs for the Mae West imitator (called Jane East) in the film show a flair for bold pattern and design.

A few years later, Mavis Ripper, a Melbourne designer was given the unique opportunity to design frocks for a fashion parade which was to be the highlight of Cinesound's feature, *Dad and Dave Come to Town* (1938). Ripper had already had some design experience on Cinesound's *It Isn't Done* (1937) designing gowns for its star Ann Richards. The plot of *Dad and Dave Come to Town* is implausible, if comic. Dad, played by Bert Bailey, inherits a fashion store and becomes known as the 'farmer's dress-maker'. This fashion parade using an innovative back-screen projection shown in the photograph received excellent pubicity and as a result, Ripper opened up an exlusive dress salon in Myers in Melbourne under her own name.

Many of Cinesound's productions dealt with themes related to the plight of people affected by the depression. *Mr. Chedworth Steps Out* (1939) starred Cecil Kellaway as an impoverished man who discovers a bag of money. Thelma Afford designed the costume for this film. She was a highly respected costume designer who had worked extensively in theatre in Adelaide and Sydney and designed for numerous historical pageants before she worked for Cinesound.

She realized that design for theatre and film required very different approaches. 'We weren't conscious of colour

4. 5. Mavis Ripper, costume designer, *Dad and Dave Come to Town*, 1938.

6. Thelma Afford, costume designer. *Mr Chedworth Steps Out*, 1939.

7. Monochrome Tonal Chart used by Thelma Afford in black and white film and television.

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when we designed costumes. We were more conscious of tone. You were working with the contrasts of light and dark that would give intensity and drama. You didn't buy materials in black and white but you did, with experience, begin to know what colours photographed dark. You used a chart of tonal values to help guide your decisions.'

She designed a gown for Jean Hatton, a teenage soprano, worn in a crowded concert hall in the film. The simple light dress with puffed sleeves emphasizes her youthfulness. Sprays of tiny bows flow across the shoulder and down the skirt giving a strong sense of pattern and texture successfully drawing our attention to her as the principal character in the scene.

Cinesound studio's feature production came to a halt when the 1939-45 war began. They were the only studio still in production in Australia at the time. There were even fewer opportunities for designers after the war as the film industry struggled to regain a hold in this country. Thelma Afford continued her design career in theatre and costumed only one other feature, this time for Charles Chauvel on *Sons of Mathew* (1949). She designed the women's frocks and went to Melbourne to buy up men's costumes. Ironically they were selected from costumes still in storage from the 1928 production of *For The Term of His Natural Life*. The firm of Rockman's produced the women's costumes and donated them to the production. Australian film costume design was still fighting low budgets and limited productions.

Most of the films made after the war were United States or British productions, motivated by the need to spend capital locked into Australia after the war. Most of the films said little about Australian attitudes or taste. Colour film technology was introduced and created new possibilities for costume design.

The Australian film industry moved sluggishly into the late Sixties and early Seventies plagued by continuing money problems. Australian film design continued to be dominated by the documentary realist tradition nurtured by the early film industry's emphasis on realism. This tradition

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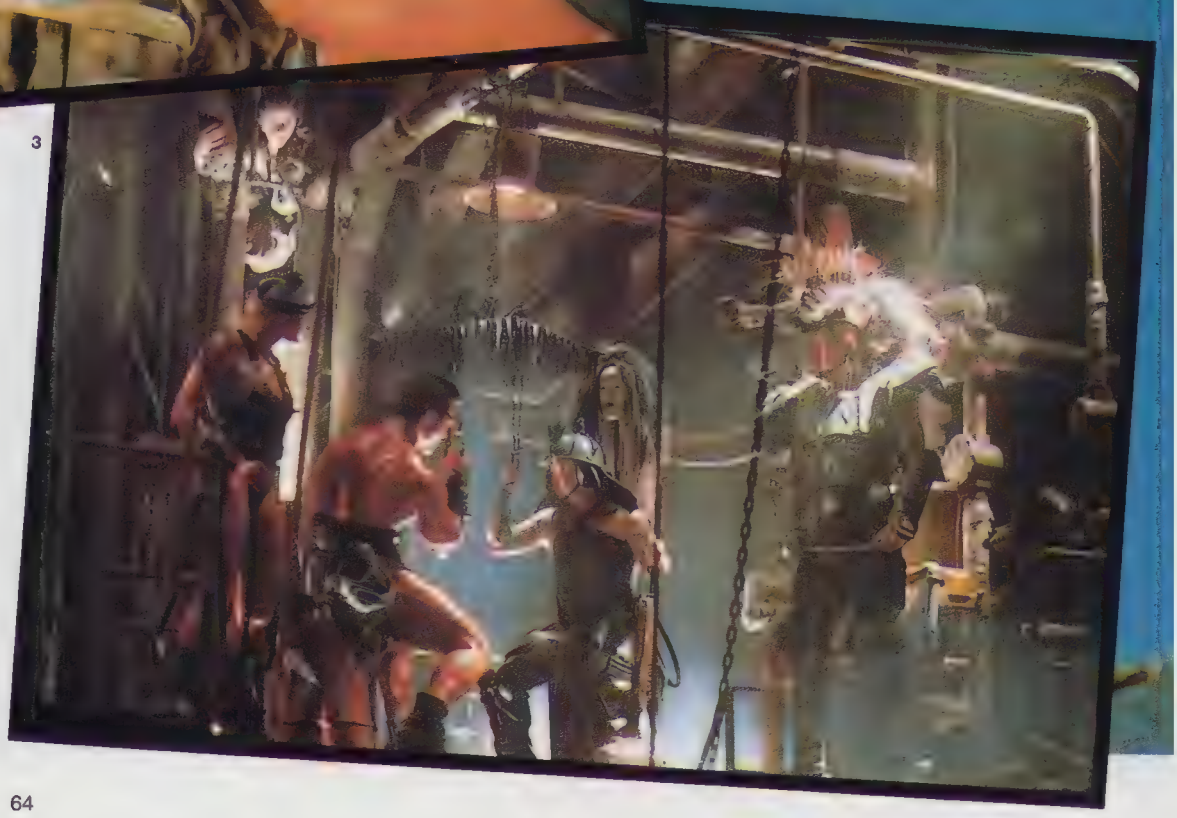


1. Lucinda Arrighi and Anna Senior. Costume designers. *My Brilliant Career*, 1979. Photo David Kynock.

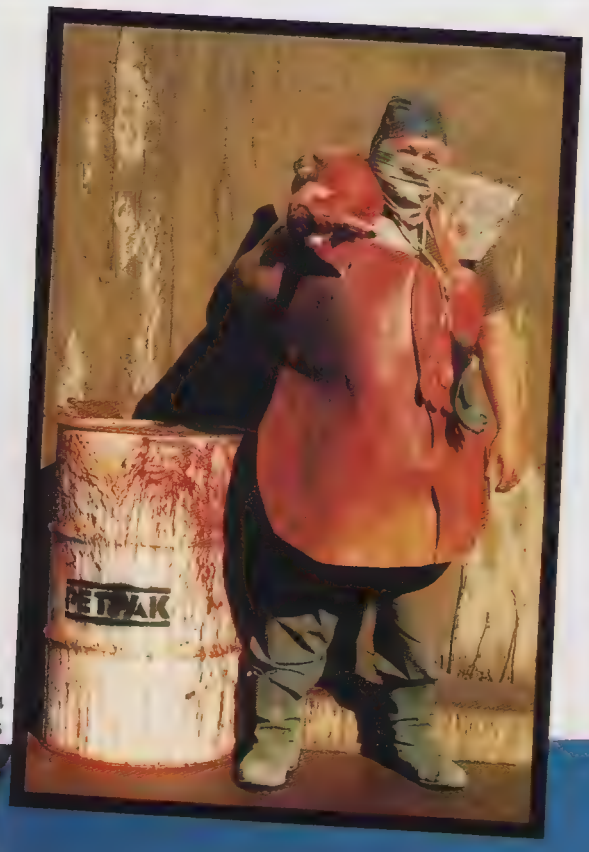
2. Norma Moriceau, costume designer. *Mad Max 2*, 1982. Photo Carolyn Johns.

3. Norma Moriceau, costume designer. *Mad Max 3*, 1985. Photo Jim Sheldon.

made good economic sense; film-makers could utilize natural locations and contemporary stories were less expensive. This meant small production and costume design budgets.

But even with the Australian film renaissance in the late Seventies, designers still couldn't support themselves on film design alone. Designers like Luciana Arrighi of *The Night of The Prowler, My Brilliant Career* and *Starstruck* do both production design and costume design. Arrighi lives and works abroad while other designers divide their careers between television, theatre and film.

Luciana Arrighi trained at The Elizabethan Theatre Trust and then later moved to Europe. With *My Brilliant Career*, she returned to production design controlling the over-all 'look' of the film's sets and costumes. Arrighi worked closely with Anna Senior the costume designer. Both agree that there are still budget problems facing designers in Australia. 'Budgets are one third of the money allotted both in Europe and America today.' But Terry Ryan of *Harlequin, The Survivor, Gallipoli, Heatwave* and *The Year of Living Dangerously* thinks that a low budget is a challenge for a designer, 'because it makes you think'. He also finds that there is an increasing awareness on the part of Australian producers of the importance of costume design in their productions.



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4. 5. Helen Hooper, costume designer. *Razorback*, 1984. Photo Carolyn Johns.

Australian film costume history emerges as a series of contradictory stylistic and cultural influences; if a style exists, it is almost accidental. The style of design rests initially on an English theatrical tradition that has evolved into an Australian realist film style. It was affected by styles of North American and European film. So where and what is Australian film costume today?

Anna Senior of *The Odd Angry Shot, My Brilliant Career, Breaker Morant* and *Maybe This Time*, suggests there is a natural style. 'It is part of our history, the bushrangers and how the country was formed. There is a certain style of dress from the very fact that English people came out in their woollen and dark clothes and settled the land.' Terry Ryan feels that a new Australian design style is emerging. He looks increasingly to Italian design for inspiration.

Helen Hooper of *Norman Loves Rose, Razorback* and *Bliss* is influenced by Italian Piero Tosi for the simplicity and almost impressionistic designs of his costumes. She feels a film like *Death in Venice* creates an impression of the period rather than absolute authenticity. 'Australian designers are moving away from that emphatic realism so clearly a part of early Australian style and moving towards a more imaginative style', or what Hooper calls 'extreme naturalism'. She admires Norma Moriceau's approach to costume design in *Mad Max 2* and *3*, though it isn't her style. In *Mad Max 3* Moriceau has subverted ordinary everyday items like fireman's hats and the insides of photocopy machines to become the dress and armour of the future.

Hooper's designs for *Razorback* show a stylistic approach to design even though the film has a contemporary setting in Queensland. Hooper's costumes, particularly in the case of the two brothers, propels costume design into a kind of visual shorthand of the personalities of the characters. She exaggerates and creates a visual impression of comic villains rather than attempting to reflect an image of 'authentic' Australian type.

Films like *Starstruck, Razorback*, and the more recent *Rebel* (Rodger Kirk designed the costumes on *Rebel* and Brian Thomson was responsible for art production on *Starstruck* and *Rebel*) demonstrate Australian design concepts are moving towards a new flamboyance and confidence. Both *Starstruck* and *Razorback* have contemporary settings but the costumes move away from 'fashion' realism and become almost symbols or emblems for their characters' feelings and ideas. *Rebel*, a musical set in the Forties, favours an interweaving of period and contemporary fashion elements and suggests a period rather than attempting to reproduce it.

But, as all designers agree, successful costume design is not independent from the other elements in a film. Often the best design is the costume that you least notice. Terry Ryan of *Gallipoli* and other contemporary films says, 'The best design can often be as subtle as the best editing, you hardly notice it'.

Historically, conditions in Australian film-making have made it extremely difficult to provide an over-view of film costume design. It is a fragmented and elusive history. As the film industry in this country begins to receive international recognition, so the costume designers gain new confidence, new opportunities and an increasing sense of creating a distinctive Australian film costume style.

Joyce Agee is a Sydney photographer and writer. She curated an exhibition of Australian film stills in 1985.

Luciana Arrighi, costume designer, Brian Thomson, art direction. *Starstruck*, 1982. Photo Bliss Swift.

Rodger Kirk, costume designer, Brian Thomson, art direction. *Rebel*, 1985. Photo Carolyn Johns.

Tiles in the Sun

Bondi Tile Mural

Allison Wiseman

The Bondi Pavilion is the visual centre of Sydney's Bondi Beach. Poised on the rim of Bondi's sandy crescent, the whitewashed building provides dressing facilities, amenities and a community centre for sun-mad visitors.

Patsy Hely was recently commissioned to produce a ceramic mural for the foyer of the building. The generous space is lighted during the day by filtered summer sunshine.

The mural is serene and pleasing to the eye. A second look reveals its complexity. The mural's apparent simplicity derives from a careful balance of complex elements. It attracts attention precisely because it fits its surroundings so well and rescues the foyer from its former drabness.

The mural is the work of ceramicist Patsy Hely assisted by Helen Leitch. The project began when the Bondi Pavilion Community Centre applied for a grant from the Community Arts Board of the Australia Council with Ms Hely in mind. The Community Centre was required to contribute financial assistance and administration as well.

This is Patsy's first mural. She has made quite a few tiles '. . . on a smaller scale, but nothing really big'. Prior to Bondi, she was involved for three years with a mural project called 'The Visual History of South Sydney'.

The funding bodies originally wanted the mural based on local history. 'We went off that idea', Ms Hely said, 'Mainly because of murals we'd both seen in the meantime, and also the one at the back of the Bondi pavilion, the painted one with all those scenes of lifesavers. It seemed we'd be duplicating in some ways.'

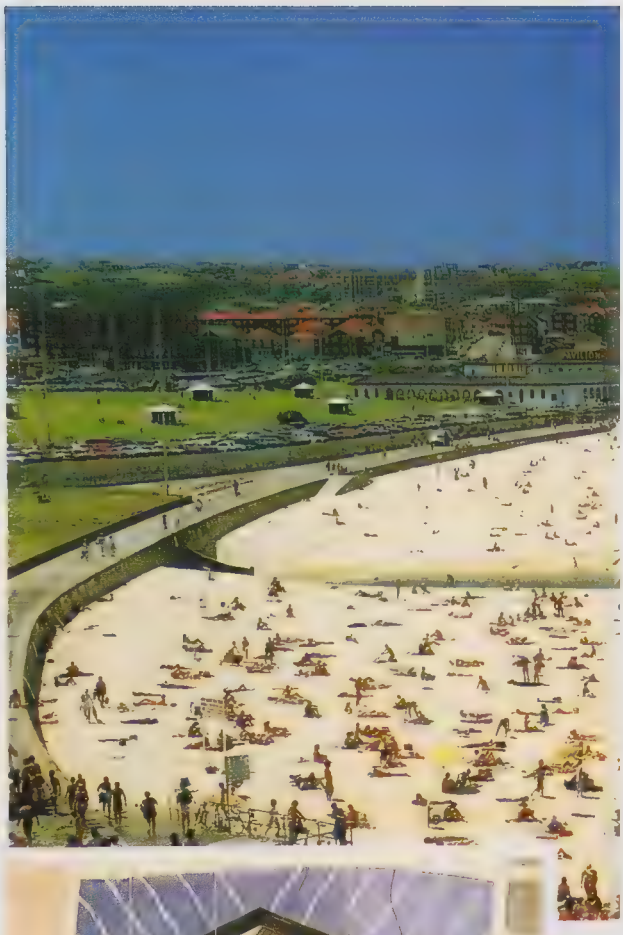
Drawings were being submitted and approved by Waverley Council who assist the Bondi Community Centre. The final result, however, bore no resemblance to the original design. I asked Patsy if the Council had objected. 'Did they notice? That's probably more to the point. It was funny working with Waverley Council in mind because you cut back on what you really wanted to do, that's too loud or too dangerous or something.'

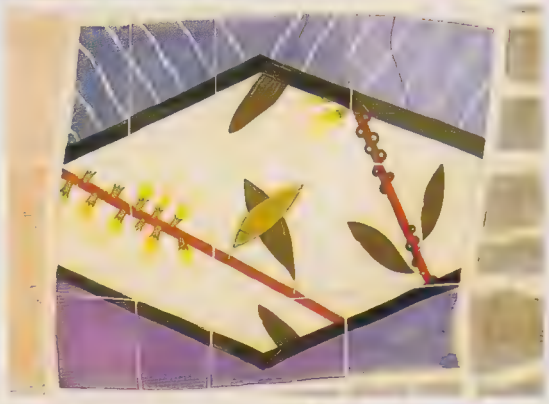
Overall involvement with the Council was minimal. 'An official from the Council saw the mural on a visit to the Pavilion (. . .'this is all second hand'. . .) but she wasn't impressed. She wanted to know our credentials. Not long after that I was in an exhibition of the Craft Council's called the Mayfair Ceramics Awards and I won it . . . all of a sudden the same official wanted to have her photo taken standing in front of the same mural.'

Although the mural was supposedly a community project, the amount of community involvement Hely and Leitch were expected to incite was ambiguous. 'The process you go through when designing is so time-consuming, just working with two of us. If you had the input of lots more people it would have taken forever.' Helen Leitch interrupts, 'I think they really wanted us to design it but then for other people to take part. I've never done community work before, but it seems in the past when I've heard about it that it works okay for ten minutes and then it interrupts getting the thing finished. People never gang around that long and keep up their enthusiasm'.

'We put a desk in the Pavilion one weekend', she continued, 'and they were meant to come along and say what they'd like to see. I think we had one person come up'.

'The thing is, we only had five weeks scheduled to do the whole thing.' The women think a successful community project like that requires someone to work in the community for a while to build up contacts.





'And it seemed as we went along the opportunities for other people to take part were really quite remote', Patsy stated simply. 'There's so many things that can go wrong at different stages so you really need to know what you're doing.'

'This ceramic mural is quite small, and you couldn't have more than two or three people working on it at once', Helen Leitch said. 'It became obvious to us as we went along that the five weeks we were allowed wasn't even enough time to make it and paint it, let alone involve other people.'

Patsy Hely replies, 'If I go into another project like this, I'd make sure that I was more specific about exactly what both parties want'. 'The only real community bit we did concerning the mural was a kids' mosaic weekend. We

Bondi photo
by Adrian Hall

Mural photos
by Helen Leitch

talked about the fact that we felt we couldn't have a lot of people doing this so instead of having the community participation in the mural, they decided it would be good for us to hold a few classes.'

The work was divided equally between the two but Helen Leitch, who, until recently, illustrated children's books, was 'endlessly asking repetitive questions'. Working in ceramics for the first time sparked her enthusiasm. '. . . it was great coming back this year (to complete the second mural) because I knew a little bit more about clays and glazes.'

They both agree that working together has helped them develop artistically. Patsy 'got a lot of drawing experience' and Helen, who works primarily in watercolour, 'got a hell of a lot of experience in stylisation'.

And as I left Patsy Hely's workshop in the Glebe Estate Workshop, they were busy discussing the possibility of working together again. Tiling a swimming pool perhaps? Or a fountain?

And Patsy's ambition? 'To keep working. Seriously, it would be really nice to do some tiles in private houses so people have them around them. More private commissions. You don't feel constrained in the sort of work you do. If you hear of anyone that needs a swimming pool . . . or a fountain . . .

Allison Wiseman is a Sydney freelance journalist.

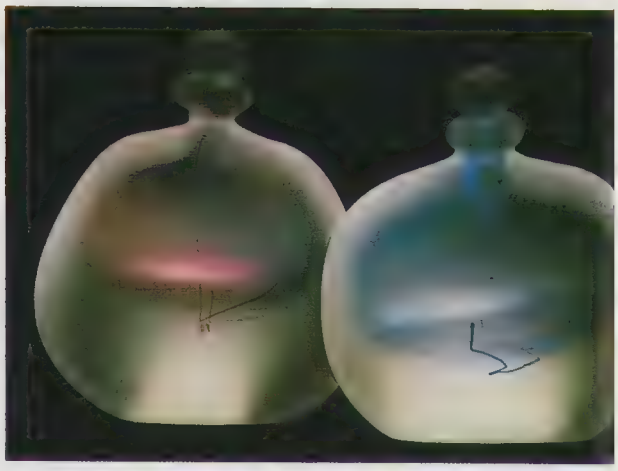
Coming Home

Glass from Chris Comins

Edward Duyker

Chris Comins is a lean Australian glassblower recently returned to this country after seven years abroad. He says the heat of the furnace depresses his appetite, but it seems he hasn't carried much bulk in years. Soon after leaving Australia in 1977, Chris began an inner journey in one of Thailand's Buddhist monasteries. Here he learned to survive on his spiritual reserves. When he finally reached Europe he was steeled by self-discipline and fired by the desire to embrace a craft. 'I started to actively *seek* a craft', he says.

Born and raised in Sydney, Chris had earlier studied dance and his father's language, French. It was in France that he put his language skills to good use in the study of stonemasonry. But when stone lost its appeal, he turned to Britain and to the far more 'exciting and instant medium of glass'. In London he did the rounds of a number of important studios and threw himself at the feet of several leading glassblowers. It was Barry Cullen who decided he didn't mind having someone around the place. As Chris puts it, 'Barry liked the idea of having someone to cater to his aristocratic needs, someone to tend to him, sweep his floors and make his teas'. For a year Chris worked for Cullen in his Fulham 'Hot Glass Studio' in return for tuition. It was under Cullen that he gained a degree of technical competence and 'started becoming useful'. Cullen rewarded him by making him his assistant on £30 per week.



About this time he started to design and make his own glassware and to sell it at the Camden market. In the eighteen months he ran his stall, he made very little money; but it became an important training ground in the face of economic realities. Chris is very critical of modern art colleges which he says 'are so intent on pushing aesthetic theory and technique, but not the practical side of crafts, especially crafts like glassmaking which have very heavy overheads'. Most art graduates, he says, come out of colleges with no real idea of the economics of their craft.

'They have had everything made freely available to them.' Chris on the other hand has been weathering it in the open. In Britain he survived on his work from the very beginning (unlike most of the glassblowing fraternity).

In 1982 Chris Comins became an assistant to Sam Herman in London. Herman taught him to 'unleash his feelings and empathy for glass and to make his approach more fluid'. Chris, however, also believes that his strongly emotional response to his craft has its origins in his childhood and youth. His Mauritian father always encouraged unrepressed emotional reflexes. Indeed Chris claims that his glassmaking is 'a visible expression' of the part of him which is French Mauritian.

When he came into contact with Charlie Meeker (whose work is represented in a host of major collections) Chris further tightened his blowing technique. His distinctive style is, in fact, characterised by tight form and an organic approach to controlled distortion. Despite this tightness, he feels there is a 'strong sense of freedom in his work'. There is certainly an absense of extremes. He seeks definition, but he does not overstate his colours. There is a subtle movement of colour around the practical kernel of his perfume bottles. Chris' work is so obviously functional, yet pleasing to the eye and comfortable to the hand. He uses lead crystal glass which simply loves light. Unlike many glassblowers he does not drown out the innate quality of such glass by saturating it.

In 1983 Chris worked for five months as a designer and blower at the 'Strawberry Farm Glassworks' in Jersey. This remarkable glass working cooperative is located in a craft centre built around a former wartime command bunker. Later that year he started designing, blowing and marketing glass in association with William Walker's studio in Dorset. He then developed a similar arrangement with the Royal College of Art and the Sunderland Polytechnic in early 1984. When I caught up with him, before his return to Australia, he was again working with Charlie Meeker at the Strawberry Farm furnace in Jersey. With him were glassworkers from Britain, Ireland and the United States. He was the only Australian. It was an important period of experimentation for him, despite the fact that he had to fulfil the cooperative's quotas of vases and bowls.

After seven years abroad, Chris Comins is glad to be home and eager to develop his craft from a firm base. Barely able to keep up with the demand for his work and with an established British market, his return to Australia is a welcome shot in the arm for the local glassmaking scene.

Edward Duyken is a Sydney academic.

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The Sowing and The Reaping

Eileen Keys

The WA potter Eileen Keys is now 83 years old. She began working with clay in the 1940s. Through her connection with Scotch College in Perth, she taught ceramics to a generation of Western Australians.

She exhibited widely in Australia throughout the 1950s and 60s. Her fascination with native ores for clay bodies and glazes always gives her work an element of surprise.

In the early 1970s she began to explore fibre and moved away from ceramics. This recent address to the students of the Canberra School of Art summarises her career to date. A valuable lecture series 'Old Poppies, Tall Poppies' organised by Peter Haynes was the occasion for this address as well as the eclarté feature in our spring issue.

The Craft Council of Great Britain have named their policy for the year 'The Glory of the Garden'. They think the time has come for some digging. So, as an Old Poppy whose roots go deep, I am going to follow their example, hoping it will be good for me and perhaps be helpful to you.

At the age of 16 I was planted in the Canterbury School of Art in New Zealand to do a traditional art training course which taught us to copy what we saw, to measure at arm's length, to be exact and to do the same when drawing casts of the human figure. All the basics were taught as well as the history of art. My craft was beaten copper; there was no pottery. After two years of this we were allowed to begin the life class.

These basics have stayed with me over fifty years of teaching; and because I learnt how the old masters designed their pictures there has come an understanding and love for a picture such as *Blue Poles*.

My conclusion that I wasn't going to be among the Tall Poppies of the artistic world led to a decision to go into Kindergarten work, particularly because of the Montessori method that had just reached New Zealand. This placed the emphasis on the individual child and learning through the sensory powers. It was important to stimulate the imagination and give plenty of scope for creativity. The seeds planted then led me to want to try some different method of teaching art.

The chance to do this came in 1925 with an appointment to the Cathedral Grammar School in Christchurch as art teacher and the principal agreeing that I could 'go my own way'. Of course it is one thing to have theories and quite another to carry them out, for these were not Kindergarten children but boys whose ages ranged from 9-15. Still, it was my chance.

Close by was a wonderful museum and among the exhibits were drawers and drawers of wonderful butterflies in a whole area from which we could learn about colour and design. I must not spend time on this period, but just say that it was exciting and it worked. So passed the next four years.

A personal note must be included here. The young senior assistant at this grammar school was also an enthusiast with advanced ideas in education. Later we married and had two children when, early in 1939 he was awarded a Carnegie Fellowship and went to the University of London. This gave me a chance to grow some more, now at the Chelsea School of Art. About that time some young men called 'The London Group' broke away from the English tradition to follow the French, and I was lucky enough to have one of these who taught me to see still life in much the same way as I had taught the boys years ago to paint colour and design from the butterflies in the museum.

We spent two years in England but our plans were broken by the war and we arrived back in New Zealand after an exciting trip.

1. *Bowl.* 9.1 x 16.2 cm. *Raku.* 1971. Australian National Gallery, Canberra. Crafts Board of the Australia Council Collection, 1980.

2. *Bowl.* 8.7 x 15.4 cm. Porcelain. 1982. Australian National Gallery. Gift of the artist, 1983.

3. *Family Group.* 37.7 x 28.6 x f17.8 cm. Stoneware. c.1956. Australian National Gallery.

2

At the beginning of 1947 my husband took up the position as principal of Scotch College in Perth. This was the chance that we had dreamed about. Because of the war teachers had been in short supply and the previous principal had found it necessary to carry on past retiring age, assisted mainly by retired men from state schools. Much of the 'garden' was overgrown and this gave us the chance to plant new seeds. In my field there were no art and crafts, no suitable equipment or rooms. Team work was needed. My husband said 'I'll give you what help I can, but I have problems of my own. Do what you can'. I asked for, and was given, double periods, and then turned to it.

In the classrooms there had been long heavy desks (with ink wells) and there were many ex-army huts which the boys called 'tram cars'. I went to the local butcher for rolls of white paper, and to the kitchen for trays which we filled with poster paints and large brushes. The boys moved the long desks in the 'tram cars' to the walls, formed circles on the floor, put the trays in the centre and went to work.

The older teachers held up their hands in horror at all this, but later in the year came, one by one, to me saying, 'There's a big improvement in these boys' 'compositions', or 'English' or 'mental arithmetic' and so on. They, too, were coming to realise that freedom of thought, discovery and imagination is what it is all about. At the same time the basics must still be there. They don't change in any art or craft.

After two years we found a teacher from Melbourne who shared my views and this left me free to start a craft. I had been introduced to clay at a Community Centre called 'Risingholme' in Christchurch so it was natural that my thoughts should turn to this. The same problems showed up, particularly the need for more space where we could learn to work with clays. So we moved the old desks (replaced in the rooms by new ones) outside to an area used mainly by the kitchen staff for hanging tea towels and close to an old laundry of my own; and profits from the school 'tuck shop' gave us funds for a roof.

A visit to the yard of a well known brick manufacturer showed me some white clay and in my ignorance, I ordered a ton(!) of what turned out to be nearly pure silica. Later on some boarders brought clay from dams on their farms. The things we made were taken to another manufacturer where white ware was fired, in saggers, to 1260° in a wood kiln. Sadly, our clay melted, so again we had to learn the hard way to make our clay stand up to this temperature. Sometimes we had our successes and proceeds from work

3

2

1. *Birdform.* 10.4 x 17.1 x 13.4 cm. Stoneware. c.1966. Australian National Gallery. Gift of Teddy and Don Letham, 1983.

2. *Vase.* 21.5 x 14.0 x 12.9 cm. Stoneware. c.1960. Australian National Gallery.

3. *Vase.* 31.4 x 23.7 cm. Stoneware. 1964. Australian National Gallery.

sold at school displays went towards an electric kiln. (I had already built a wood one but firing with this was hard work, sometimes done late at night). Boys and parents and staff were all helpful in various ways, one even making a kick wheel from a suggestion in Leach's book, so this I had to learn to use.

One early disaster with the electric kiln, due to its having been accidentally left on far too long, led later to my unpacking a black mess and throwing the pieces onto the lawn in the rain; but a pleasant surprise was to follow, some lovely pieces of my first stoneware. (It was fortunate that I had learnt to mix clay to stand up to a high temperature).

I kept on with my voluntary teaching groups, but had to find time for my own work, often at nights. There seemed to be so much to learn about clay, so many experiments to try with the different kinds until I could put my hand in a mixture and know what it would do.

There was never any need to mix oxides with clay; all the natural oxides were already there; they had to be mixed as in a cocktail. One mixture would cause shrinkage, another the reverse, one would make it 'sweet' and another 'sour'. It was the same with glazes.

As the boys mixed their clays they learnt more about the land from which it had come. This had an interesting sequel many years later when an Old Boy rang to ask for my opinion about selling clay from his home farm as they were experiencing hard times. I knew that clay and liked it, so a number of tests and analyses were made and with the help of his mother (formerly a member of one of my adult education classes), a good saleable body was developed and came into much demand, so helping the farm over a difficult period.

At this point I would like to say after many years experience that if I were to start teaching pottery in a school situation again there would not be any wheels and the only firing would be *raku*. In this way my students would learn to mix and shape clay from start to finish, to handle fire with its sense of danger and to experience the excitement and joy of firing and seeing the finished work in the same process.

Later when in England I saw stoneware everywhere and was introduced to a mineralogist named Botley in Chelsea. When I sought his help in analysing some different minerals he advised me; 'Go back to your own country and work there; it's the richest in the world'.

Back in WA it was a matter of where to start. The dust from the granites was near at hand and could be used for glazes, but after seeing the minerals at Chelsea I felt there was so much colour to be had by really looking for it. So, having the interest of my husband, we spent our holidays seeing as much as we could of the mines in WA. First we went to the Hammersley Ranges where almost every known mineral is found; and memories include going down old copper mines for cobalt when the temperature was 42°C. Later we went to the gold mines in Kalgoorlie, and visited the felspar mines for lithium, spodumene, and so on, in Coolgardie. Some months were spent in Darwin and Rum Jungle and if time allowed, there is a story to tell of uranium, the most exciting mineral of them all. In contrast nickel ore is the most wonderful, giving all the colour one needs and even providing wonderful fertiliser for the garden. An old desk outside my pottery shed was covered with all sorts of mineral specimens, including natural cobalt (scarce in WA) and many a boy studying geology would come to ask for a piece from the desk.

There were further problems to be solved. A hired oil kiln had been used only for low temperatures so my first effort at reduction with it resulted in shelves and pottery becoming once again a black mess. Then I learnt to leave iron out of the body of my clay and on a light body, let the minerals have their say.

I had to crush minerals in a miner's dolly pot, and then experiment to find the melting point of most of them. To get the separation necessary I began to use rock and ash as a flux, generally 80 percent rock and 20 percent ash, but some needing more and some needing less. This meant much experimental work on the ashes to avoid the colour from them influencing the colour in the rock. I tried ashes from many parts of the state and a jam tree from one country town gave a bright orange which suggested uranium. 'But that's impossible', said the donor, yet five years later uranium was found running right through that area.

3

A new challenge came in the early seventies at a Craft Conference in Toronto. When I went to a workshop on dyeing wool with natural dyes I knew nothing at all about this. I listened to their talks on the difference in dyes from the same trees all over the world, but couldn't understand why they didn't go to the source of the dyes, the minerals the trees lived on. The primitive people dyed wool in clay and used ash as a mordant, that I knew. So on returning home my roots went searching further afield to see what my minerals would do on another of earth's gifts. Learning to spin and dye wool has given me much pleasure in my older years.

Being more than a potter my main interest has been to find out about the minerals in the earth around me. By a happy chance soon after writing these words I came across the following in Dr. Sanders' book **The World of Japanese Ceramics** published in 1967. 'For potters this book should provide stimulus to explore their surroundings for native regional materials from which they can develop a completely unique, individual type of pottery. If those potters for whom such an approach is possible and practical were to follow it, there would be a revolution in ceramic exhibitions and a development of public interest that would surpass our imagination.'

Now I would like to finish with another quotation, this time from an interviewer, Mea Hassell, who summed upon what I said to her like this: 'I don't know how to explain it neatly, but the way I see it is the ground gives us everything. We take the clay from the ground, we take the wool from the sheep that eat the plants that need the minerals and the sunshine. Then we use the plants and minerals and sunshine to dye the wool, and use the minerals to glaze the clay. Fire and water come into it too.'

'See what I'm trying to say? It all comes from the ground and the sun. I just put it all together again. It works because it's meant to.'

An Old Poppy, who feels she is still growing, wishes you well.

Eileen Keys wishes to thank the Christensen Fund for help in the typing of this paper and the preparation of her slides.

Fatta in Casa Home Made

Ann Berriman

The origin of *pasta* making is difficult to pin down. The Arabs used it in a dish with chick peas and the implements used in the making of pasta were found in tomb frescoes of the Etruscans. The Greeks introduced *laganono* to southern Italy where *tagliatelle* are still called *laganelle*. In Roman times, recipes from the 3rd century *De Re Coquinaria* include fried pasta strips garnished with pepper and honey.

It has been said that Marco Polo introduced *pasta asciutta* (dried pasta) to Italy. He did bring some from Java, but as he compared it to 'our own *lasagne*' it seems that it was already there. The Italians however, have brought the basic craft of mixing flour and water to a high state of art. There are no less than 653 recipes in Vincenzo Buonassisi's *The Classic Book of Pasta* referred to as the bible of the world's most versatile food.

There is no doubt that the imaginative shapes and names of *pasta*, quite apart from the addition of sauces, add to its piquancy. *Penne* are shaped like quill-pens; *farfella*, small bow-ties; *conchiglie* means sea-shells; *cappalletti*, little hats and *oriecchiete*, little ears.

For many Australians the earliest experience of spaghetti was in a Heinz tin but through Italian migration, there is a greater awareness of the delights of real *pasta* dishes. For Raul Bassi of the *Pasta House* in Leichhardt, the introduction to pasta came through his Grandmother, who like many other Italians migrated to Argentina and brought the art with her.

His first memory is of the freshly made *pasta* fascinatingly laid out to dry on his grandparents' big double bed. 'It was the broadest surface in the house and used to catch the breeze from the window.'

In those days *pasta* was made in the house daily, just as bread was baked in many households. 'Each day my Grandmother would knead and roll out the *pasta*, then cut it into various shapes according to the dish she was going to prepare. Sometimes she would make *gnocchi* with potato, curling it with a fork, it would take many hours. Now the machine makes it the same way.'

Two years ago Raul Bassi joined his uncle and aunt in their thriving fresh *pasta* business. Although a factory suggests mechanisation and a vast workforce, this *pasta* factory literally manufacturers its product with the family and three or four friends, all of whom can be seen from the large shop window fronting the street.

But the story goes further back . . . Seven years ago Michael and Elsa Aguas started the factory when Michael left his work as a maritime engineer with the Sydney ferries. They remembered the *pasta* factories on almost every block of Buenos Aires and realised they could cater for the needs of *pasta* in Leichhardt. As Raul said, 'The big companies were established in each city taking care of the dry *pasta* market, but not the fresh.'

The small factory was quickly established and grew so Raul's uncle wrote, asking him to join them. Raul, who had been studying medicine rather unhappily for four years responded with pleasure to the opportunity to come to Australia. Last year Michael Aguas died and is very much missed. Now Elsa and Raul look after the daily output. 'We start at 7.30am and often don't finish before 8.00pm.' Elsa tells me these facts with obvious pride, showing none of the fatigue which it must entail. In her long apron, she is so much at home it could be her own kitchen.

We discussed her basic method for making dough: Take a large wooden surface, make a mound of the flour with a well in the centre, break in the eggs. Beat with the fingers, drawing in the flour and working it in with the fingertips. Knead well and press in with the heel of the hand until smooth. Then wrap the dough in a cloth and let rest for half an hour. Fairly simple . . . but the art lies in calculating the right amount of eggs and flour, as well as being quick about the final stretching and rolling out, until the dough is paper thin.

The principles used in the *Pasta House* are the same but small machines imported from Italy, Argentina and Denmark handle the mixing, kneading and rolling. Seventy kilos can be mixed at a time by revolving blades. It is then kneaded between rollers to form two sheets which are then blended together to become a single sheet. At this stage it looks like rolls of paper towelling, then later a bolt of material. The consistency can be controlled by the machine to give the desired thickness as the *pasta* for *cannelloni* is thicker than that of *tagliatelle*.

The staff are as much a part of these processes as the machine, watching, guiding and manipulating the soft material as it is being worked. Until recently it was still being cut to size by hand.

There is a certain fascination in watching the machines. The *ravioli* is made by filling between two sheets of *pasta* and stamped out to form a tray of small pillows, the *tagliatelle* sheet is cut into short ribbons which fall evenly onto a rod ready for the dryer, or the dough is extruded to form *fettuccine* in long soft ribbons that drop onto a tray.

For Robert Mowbray who has been with the *Pasta House* from the beginning, it is a way of life. 'I love the work really, I work with machines at home, but this is the real work. I just love it, just watching the machines and the way they work the *pasta*. Michael Aguas taught me – he was a good man.'

Before Michael had installed the large fan-cooled drying rooms, Robert, being an innovative engineer, made racks to hold trays under the fan motor that cooled the freezer. This area is still used for drying when the weather is humid and it is difficult to get the moisture out of the *pasta*.

In the drying room we were surrounded by racks of green, coral pink, brick red, brown and yellow-cream. Raul Bassi smiled with pleasure: 'We think we have the best colour made in Sydney. Everything we use is natural, basil, paprika, spinach. When you cook it you can smell the spinach or tomato. We use fresh eggs, each one broken in by hand. *Pasta* used to be made with flour. It still is in Italy, but now we use semolina because it is much lighter than flour and cooks more quickly. Nowadays life is so fast, husband and wife work, it is necessary to be able to prepare food quickly.'

Looking about, I could appreciate his pride in the delicate colouring, shades of green and pink and in the delicious aroma of tomato and basil wafting around us. This led to a discourse on sauces, such a vital part of the pasta experience.

The *Pasta House* also makes a range of sauces, each one made to accompany a particular *pasta* flavour. *Tuco*, made with cheese is a delicate addition to basil *tagliatelle*, while *pesto*, a Genoese sauce made with basil is right for plain *pasta*.

Elsa recalls their first days of sauce making: 'The father of my husband was Spanish and the Spanish like very much the sauces so Michael made all the sauces. *The Jackaroo Sauce* made of oregano, thyme, and garlic, many things he made for his very good friend who was a jackaroo, a *gaucho*, in Argentina. He loved making the sauces.'

The *Pasta House* also prints its own labels, a simple one in blue, red or green. As Raul says, 'It is in keeping with our

principles, we want to show that it is really handmade' The fame of the *Pasta House* has already spread throughout the land, vast quantities of fresh pasta are shipped off to all major cities, 'Even large orders to North Shore delicatessens', says Raul.

It is also packed by hand – weighed on simple scales, dropped through a small cylinder into a plastic bag held underneath. The most basic of packing techniques yet effectively controlled by one person and I was told by Raul, 'Designed by my Uncle'!

A good business never stands still but is always progressing. To this end the *Pasta House* family has been experimenting with suburban outlet branches and a fast-food, takeaway or eat-in restaurant next door. This would complete the cycle from the kitchen to the table.

The cooking of *pasta* is a continuation of the creative craft involving its production. The water must be boiling (a drop of oil prevents sticking), the *pasta* cooked to that much-discussed provocative state of *al dente* best described as 'bitey'. It must be drained as quickly as possible, a small amount of water to remain to aid the distribution of the sauce. Only experience tells you that

Photos
Christopher Shain

conchiglie or *penne* hold more than *fettuccine* or *spaghetti* and they must be well drained.

'Surprisingly', Raul says, 'Many people are still learning about *pasta*. The restaurant will provide a quick meal of any one of our *pastas* with a chosen sauce. The *pasta* will be cooked at the time of ordering not pre-cooked and heated again.' All this will happen behind a long counter in full view of the customers. Not too impossible to contemplate as the *Pasta House* pasta can be cooked in about two minutes. It is also a practical way of demonstrating the cooking method.

Perhaps it is only marginally removed from the street *pasta* vendors in Italy during the 18th and 19th century who set up a table with a large bowl of *spaghetti* with a dish of grated cheese beside it. Customers would throw back their heads to an appropriate angle and lower in the strands by hand.

I left the *Pasta House* with a selection of *pasta* and sauces and the satisfaction of seeing a traditional hand-crafted product 'almost' home-made. For the *cognoscenti* who find magic in the phrase *fatta in casa*, it's all there for the asking!

Ann Berriman is a Sydney journalist.

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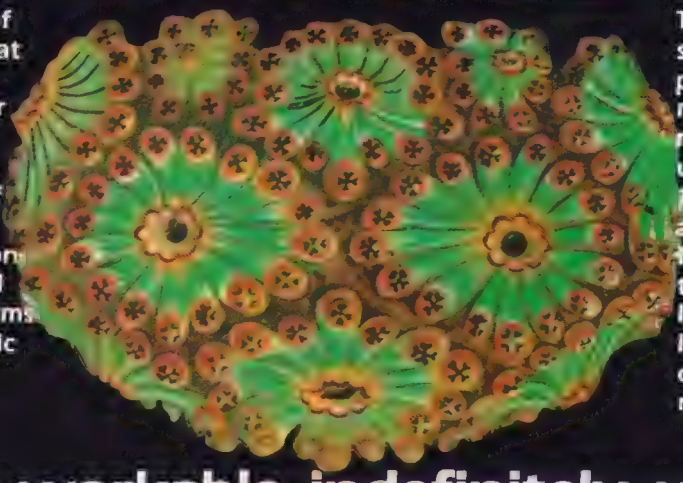

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Restoring Elizabeth Farm

IV: Old Technology and New

Sue Hunt

The preparation of Elizabeth Farm as an historic house museum was unusual. Rather than acquiring objects which were 'right for the period', its curatorial policy consisted of producing a number of accurate replicas of surviving objects *known* to have been in the house. It is for this reason the Elizabeth Farm project brought together modern technology and craftspeople not normally associated with historic house museums.

Several pieces of furniture, paintings and decorative objects owned and used by John and Elizabeth Macarthur were traced and documented by careful research in various state and private repositories. These key pieces still survive in the possession of the descendants of John and Elizabeth Macarthur and were the focal point for the simple but accurate reconstruction of the interiors of Elizabeth Farm.

Elizabeth Farm.
Joseph Lycett.
Views in Australia. 1824.
Mitchell Library.

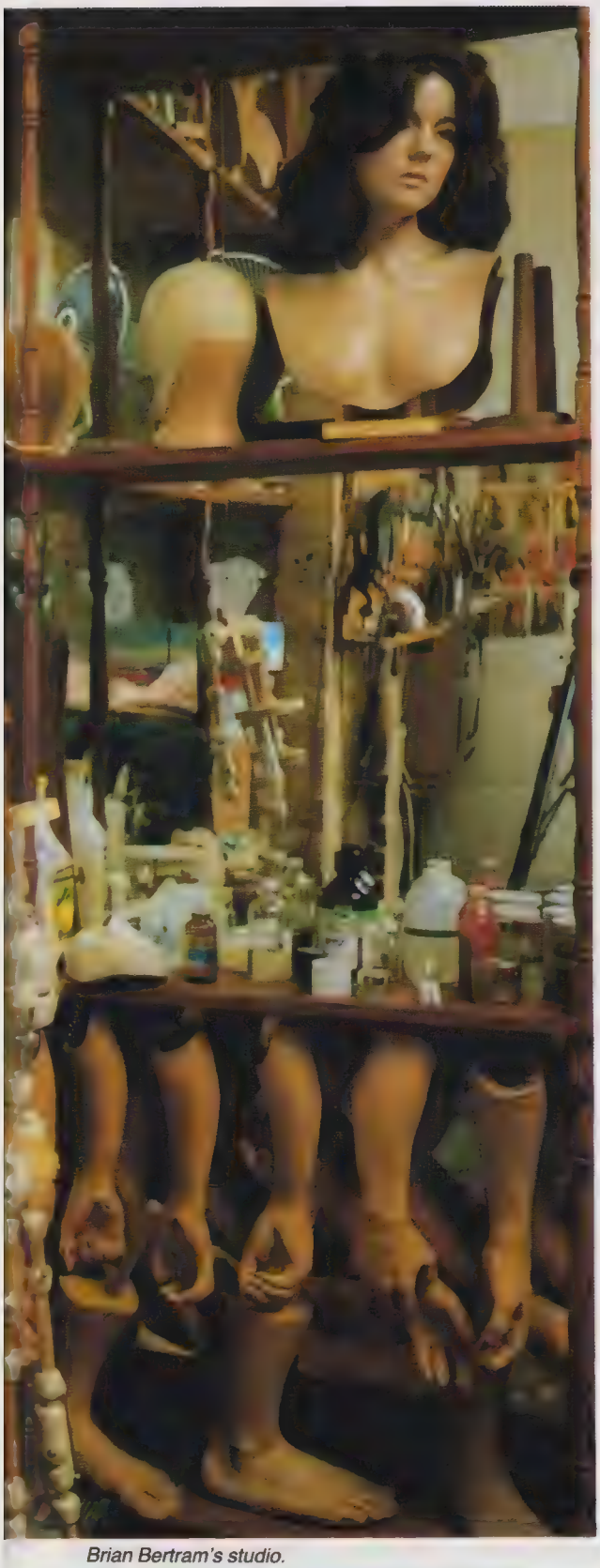
Whilst this project may seem a relatively simple task, the making of an exact copy of a 19th century marble inkwell,

an elaborately moulded gilt frame or a 19th century wooden toy, for example, is an exacting and difficult task. It is not enough to produce something that looks similar to an original. It has to be as accurate as possible. It is for this reason that Brian Bertram's skill and experience in producing replicas, human mannikins, modelled figures, plastic castings and live mouldings was what the Historic Houses Trust needed at Elizabeth Farm.

Walking into Brian Bertram's house and workshop is like entering a world of artifice and illusion. Synthetic resin torsos, reproduction African masks and sculptures, display casts of legs, arms and heads confront the visitor. It is a fascinating visual feast.

Brian specializes in casting, moulding, special effects and three-dimensional makeup and almost anything else connected with exhibitions and displays. Brian's experience began at the Australian Museum where he worked for 24 years as a display preparator and exhibition designer. After looking through photographs of his work and visiting his studio it is amazing to see the scope of his replicas: anthills to lizards; prehistoric men and women; kangaroos and skulls.

Brian began his career in illustration but soon became interested in live casting. Examples of his torso series from this early period are scattered throughout his house. For the past six years Brian has been working freelance on such projects as the models in the Berrima, NSW courthouse. Recently Brian has been involved with three-dimensional and special effects make-up for television. He currently teaches this subject at two schools



Brian Bertram's studio.

Brian Bertram.

One of Brian's current projects.

Facsimile of 1822 gold medal awarded to John Macarthur by the Society of Arts, London.

Obverse.

From a private collection.

John Macarthur, Junior. Portrait facsimile.

in Sydney: the Three Arts Makeup Centre at Chippendale and Film Makeup Technology at Camperdown.

Brian is involved in a very unusual and demanding art form. When asked if there were other people in Sydney working in this area he knew very few. He has built up his skills and techniques gradually over many years and after much experimentation. Each exhibition, tableau, or reconstruction developed at the museum brought new problems and demanded new technical solutions. Improvising with museum and private work, Brian discovered many materials such as modified dentist's alginate he now uses for live body casting. Brian recently purchased a small computer to store the technical knowledge he has acquired over many years. At some stage he hopes to publish this material.

Brian first came into contact with the Trust's houses when he was asked to reproduce a Gothic tombstone and some sculptured heads in 1979. This rather unusual request was part of an exhibition of 'Gothick Taste' held at Elizabeth Bay House. He also reproduced a replica of the bust of Alexander Macleay in the possession of the Linnean Society, as well as making delicious looking plates of 19th century sweets for an exhibition called 'Childsplay' for Elizabeth Bay House.

One of Brian's first projects at Elizabeth Farm was to reproduce three 19th century gold medals. These medals were awarded to John Macarthur by the Society of Arts, London in 1822 and 1824 for his contribution to the wool industry in the new colony. The early 1820s were years of success for Macarthur, who received unprecedented prices for his wool in London. **The Sydney Gazette** in November, 1822 ran a special account of the medals awarded to J. McArthur Esq, 'for the importation of the largest quantity of fine wool, the growth of N.S.W., and a second for the importation of wool from the same country of such a degree of fineness as should render it applicable to the same uses as the fine wools of Spain and Saxony'.

The connection between John Macarthur and the wool industry is an important part of the history of Elizabeth Farm. This aspect of the property is discussed in various publications available at the house, but the facsimiles of the medals present tangible documents for visitors. Apart from their historical significance these medals are of considerable aesthetic interest. The elaborate gold detailing and finely wrought profile of Grecian heads on the back make these medals fascinating 19th century decorative objects.

To produce accurate replicas, Brian had to make a two-piece silicone rubber mould of the medals. Although silicone rubber is expensive, he uses it because 'you can get very precise results with it'. In the case of the medals, precision was essential. Once he made the rubber mould, Brian cast it in polyester resin. The cast was then coated with gold leaf, an intricate and time-consuming process.

One of Brian's most difficult projects was the reproduction of John Macarthur's inkwell. This marble inkwell, set with

Elizabeth Macarthur. Original in Dixson Library.

intaglio portraits, dates from about 1830 and by family tradition belonged to John Macarthur. The reproduction now sits on John Macarthur's desk in his library/bedroom, together with a feather quill and facsimiles of his letters.

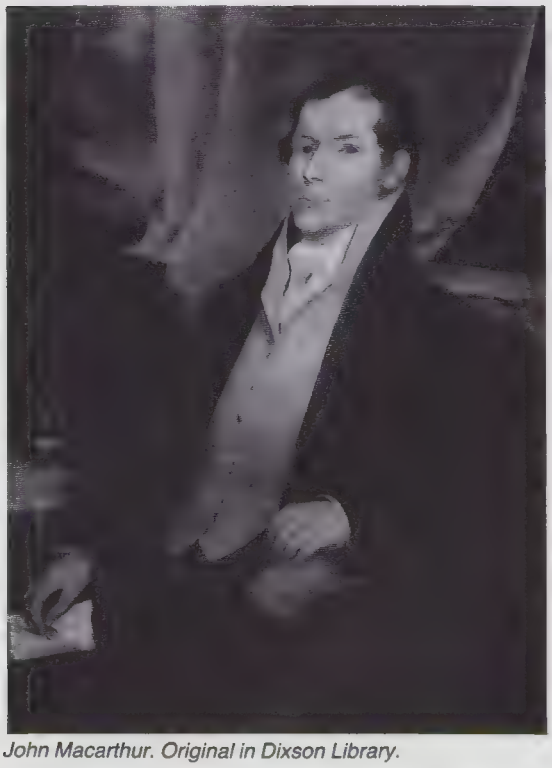
To reproduce the inkwell, each of the two parts were separately bedded onto slabs of plasticine, into which 'keys' were indented with the top of a pen. The keys served to ensure proper alignment of the two halves of the moulds. Circular walls of plasticine were then placed around each piece to form 'dams', and these dams were filled with silicone rubber. Silicone rubber is a runny liquid when first catalysed, later curing into a tough synthetic elastomer. When the rubber cured, each piece of the inkwell, still in its mould, was inverted and the process was repeated for the undersides. This resulted in two-piece moulds, which were then stripped off the originals. Brian then mixed separate coloured lots of polyester resin and painted coloured resin into the impressions. This was to approximate the coloured intaglios on top of the inkwell.

Brian had to find a way of making the resin look like handsome green marble with lively flecks of colour throughout. To do this, he cast other slabs of coloured resin, then smashed them up. These were mixed through the resin that was poured to form the main body of the inkwell top. The same process was applied to the base, after care had been taken to separately colour the brass surrounds of each small well.

The actual process of casting the polyester resin into the silicone rubber mould was a difficult one. 'The timing is critical', Brian said. For the inkwell, he had to get the two sections, lid and bottom, poured and assembled before they hardened. 'The resin does not actually dry, it catalyzes as a result of putting two chemicals together. The resin first reacts to form a gel, then gradually hardens.' For the inkwell this process took two hours.

It is astonishing to see how truthful the copy is to the original, how precise the intaglios are and how much like marble its colour, texture and sheen really is.

Another fascinating object, possibly belonging to John and Elizabeth Macarthur's children or grandchildren, is a small wooden toy sheep. This battered but endearing toy owned by the Macarthur descendants, was also copied by Brian Bertram. In fact two copies were made, one painted as the original may have been and now placed in the Blue Bedroom for visiting children to play with. Another reproducing the colour and patina of the original as it now exists is for general display.



John Macarthur. Original in Dixson Library.

Little is known of this toy, its origins or maker. It does appear to have been used a great deal as evidenced by its well-handled look and its missing ears and horns.

Whilst machine-made toys, often cheap enough for ordinary people to buy, were available in Britain by the 1820s, Australians did not have them until much later. It was a real privilege to have any toys. Only the children of rich families would have owned the toy boats, horses, and soldiers suitable for boys; or the dolls, doll's houses, sewing and embroidery sets made for girls. The original crude, painted wooden sheep is neither machine-made, nor fits into these typical categories. Rather, it was perhaps hand-hewn for the children by a servant or labourer on the Macarthur estate.

Due to the delicate nature of the toy sheep with its four tiny legs connected to a strange platform with wheels, Brian had to adjust his usual casting methods. The silicone rubber was applied to the sheep with a paintbrush, rather than poured on. About six coats were needed, which included two layers of gauze bandage as reinforcement. As this made a very lightweight mould, unable to withstand the pressures of casting; it was enveloped in a fibreglass 'mother mould'. After casting in a resin the colour of bare wood, Brian then painted the sheep and duplicated the texture of the battered wood.

The copies of the oil portraits of John and Elizabeth Macarthur are among other unusual reproduction objects at Elizabeth Farm. The reproduction of both the paintings and the gilt frames was a joint project by Brian Maginnity, Brian Bertram and Brian Barrow. Brian Maginnity photographed the portraits, Brian Bertram made the frames and Brian Barrow gilded them.

The artist and provenance of the companion portraits of John and Elizabeth Macarthur, held by the Dixon Gallery, Sydney, is unknown. The portraits depict Elizabeth and John as well established citizens of wealth and position in the colony, not the young and newly married couple who had arrived in New South Wales in 1790, after surviving the horrifying voyage of the second fleet.

Brian Maginnity began the reproduction process by photographing the very dark portraits with special, polarized light techniques. The colour photographs were then printed on cibachrome, a special matt paper with a long life span and particular sensitivity to ultra-violet light. The print had a plastic laminate placed over its surface and was then mounted onto artist's canvas. To produce the accurate surface effect of a painting, rather than just a photograph, the surface was brushed over with a newly

From a private collection.

Edward Macarthur. Portrait facsimile.

developed lacquer. This gives the image a *painted* rather than *photographed* look, with a texture simulating brushstrokes.

The frames for the pictures involved more modern technology and were made by Brian Bertram. The making of frames for grand pictures in stately houses in the 19th century was the task of professional, specialist framemakers, often called carvers and gilders. One of the best known colonial framemakers in the 1840s was Lawrence Cetta, later Cetta & Hughes of George Street, Sydney. The ornamented frame, very popular for significant paintings in grand houses, would have originally been made from a carved negative. *Papier mâché*, plaster, and a composite material of glue, whiting, rosin, turpentine and Burgundy pitch was pressed into wooden moulds.

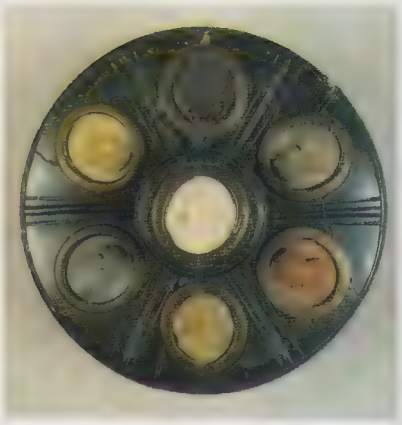
An accumulation of these moulds became very valuable assets for carving and gilding businesses, who used them over and over again. As the demand increased for such ornamented frames, machinery was used to produce ornaments very cheaply. A contemporary English 19th century account described how different this was to 'the wood carving which was formerly executed by real artists such as Gibbons, a single work of whose we have known to produce upwards of 200 guineas'.

Brian Bertram also used the principle of moulding and casting but makes a silicone rubber mould of the original picture frame and then casts the mould with polyester resin. This is much quicker than the original process of carving an elaborate wooden mould.

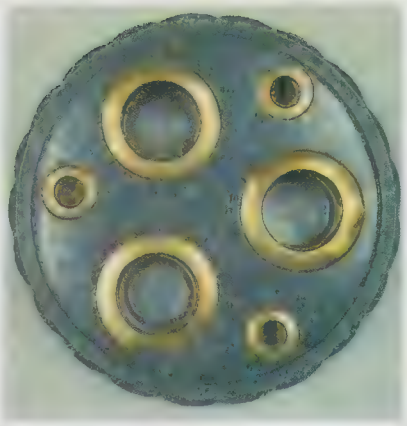
Once the frames were cast, Brian Barrow, a specialist in painted finishes, proceeded to gild them. Gilding, the process of applying gold leaf to surfaces, usually wood, is another highly specialist craft. The technique was traditionally used for picture and looking-glass frames and upholstery fixtures. Brian has been working full-time in this field since 1965. He receives many restoration and re-gilding jobs for mirrors, painted furniture, picture frames and chandeliers. For the past four years Brian has been working from his marvellous late 19th century house at Waverley, itself quite a showpiece of 19th century painted finishes, such as marbling, woodgraving, highly elaborate ceiling and wall decorations.

Brian's workshop is the reconditioned stables at the back of the house.

Gilding in the 19th century could be achieved by three methods: water, oil or fire. Firegilding was generally used only for metal, usually bronze or copper, and was the least practised method in the trade. Gold was dissolved into mercury then put into a chamois bag and rubbed onto the metal. When this was fired the mercury oxidized and fell off, leaving the gold. The late 19th century **Practical Carver and Gilders Guide and Picture Frame Maker's Companion** suggests that 'moulding full of small members and work full of ornaments are generally gilt in oil, while broad flat surfaces and plain beads and hollows are gilt in water'.



Top of John Macarthur's inkwell.



Base of the inkwell.

Forming the mould with Plasticine walls.

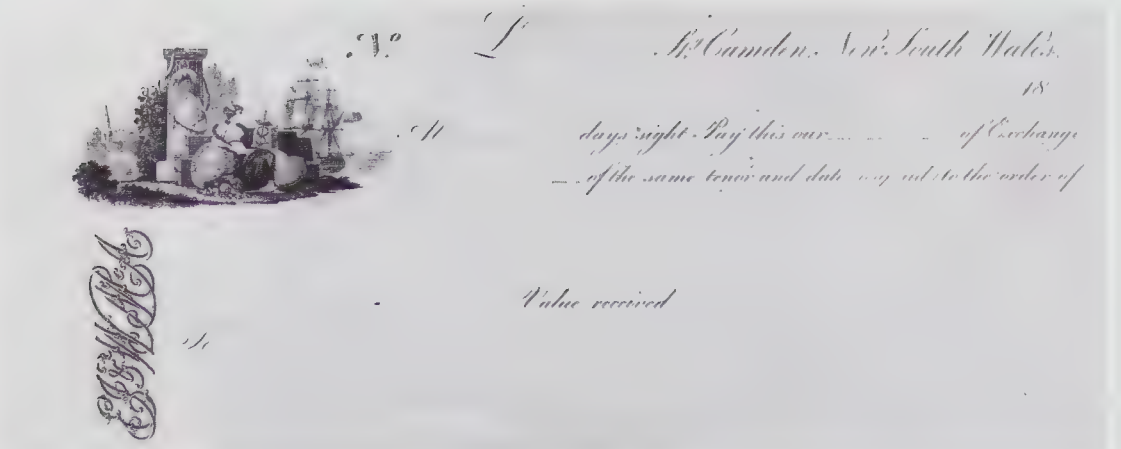
Removing the inkwell from the silicon rubber.

The mould showing the casting in polyester resin.

The Library Bedroom at Elizabeth Farm with John Macarthur's writing desk and inkwell.

Toy sheep facsimile used in Blue Bedroom.

Toy Sheep. Painted cedar
Possibly given to the Macarthur's children or grandchildren.



Reproduction of Macarthur's Promissary Note from The Mitchell Library.

Illus. of Useful Arts, London, 1860.

Picture-frame Gilder's workshop and tools.

Detail of Gilder's workshop taken from illustration at left.

Oil and water gilding differ only in the size used, one using water-soluble size and the other oil-soluble. Water gilding is only suitable for interiors as the size would dissolve on contact with rain. Brian Barrow gilded the frames of Elizabeth and John Macarthur in oil gilding. He said the methods and tools of gilding have not changed very much since the 16th century. Brian's methods are still basically as outlined in the 19th century **Practical Carver and Gilder's Guide**.

Gilding is a complicated, time-consuming craft. Firstly Brian applied a number of coats of gesso, a substance made of chalk and size, to the finished polyester resin cast. This surface is then prepared very carefully and smoothed by sanding and chisel work. It is very important to achieve a good base as gold will reveal the slightest blemish or uneveness in the surface. Brian then applies red bole, a red clay mixed with water. This gives the gold a warm red glow as a foundation and allows burnishing of the work. The frame is shellacked and then given two coats of oil size before gilding.

Gilding can only begin if the surface is tacky or nearly dry. Nineteenth century accounts stress how important the timing is at this stage. 'If the gold is applied when it is too tacky or not dry enough, it will be dull.' Brian used imitation gold leaf for the Elizabeth Farm frames, as it is considerably cheaper, much heavier and therefore easier to handle and just as appropriate when working with imitation pieces. Brian said he generally uses real gold leaf when he restores antique pieces.

Brian still uses the 19th century technique of applying the gold leaf to the frame by 'cutting up' leaves of gold into convenient pieces suitable to the various parts of the frame then taking them up with a gilder's tip. This is a wide brush with a very soft, thin spread of bristles. Nineteenth century accounts suggest that when the gold covers the frame it should be 'pressed down with a dabber' and then 'skewed well in with a badger'. A skewing brush, a rather long-haired brush set in quill was used to brush out and off the frame all the skewings or small particles of gold. After the gold leaf is laid on, the frame is shellacked and aged. Brian said it was often the practice in the 19th century to antique the frame even when new.

The Elizabeth Farm project involved not only new technology but the revival and utilization of old technology. A particularly interesting example of this is the reprinting of the Macarthur Bill of Exchange, the original now held by the Mitchell Library. A Bill of Exchange is similar to a cheque, although in this case it was elaborately decorated. A fascinating allegorical illustration with wool, sheep, ships and crests it expressed something of the Macarthur's family and business interests as well as their inspirations. This mid 19th century engraving has been housed by the Mitchell Library for many years without any attempt to reprint it.

The Historic Houses Trust engaged a specialist printmaker, Rose Vickers, to clean the old plate and if possible reprint it. Several good quality prints resulted.

Therefore, whilst Historic House museums are usually thought of as places which preserve and perpetuate old customs, objects and crafts, preparation of Elizabeth Farm involved the use of modern technology to provide visitors with an imaginative and living reconstruction.

Sue Hunt is the Curator of Education at Elizabeth Farm.

THE FAWKES ©VR

THERE WAS MOVEMENT AT THE STATION...

AND THE WORD SOON GOT 'ROUND!

MORTNEY, WE JUST HAD THE CARPETS DONE!
I'M JUST DIGGING FOR THE KILN. I'M A SERIOUS POTTER AND...
OHIGOD THE GARDEN!
I'M, I'M SORRY CLEMMY.. I'LL, I'LL WRITE YOU A HAIKU...
THIS IS AUSTRALIA- WE COULD HAVE A SWIMMING POOL BY NOW

THEN IT CAME BACK TO HER ... FOR BETTER FOR WORSE, FOR RICHER FOR POORER, FOR MORE OR LESS CREATIVE - SHE WOULD SACRIFICE HER BED OF ROSES EVEN FOR THE MAN SHE LOVED: MORTNEY THE POTTER, MORTNEY THE ARTIST - A FARMER NO MORE.

Asleep. 15 x 25cm. Dan Hyles. 1985.

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GALLERIES AND EXHIBITORS

Galleries and Exhibitors is a feature in ***Craft Australia*** that aims to provide exposure for work which is either on exhibition at the time of publication or has been exhibited during the quarter of the year preceding publication. It is open to craftspeople, galleries (national, regional and private), organisations and guilds that submit the following information together with suitable colour slides or black and white photographs:

Name of exhibitor (maker)
Title of work (if titled)
Media
Technique
Materials used
Dimensions
Year of execution

Name of Gallery or venue where shown together with opening and closing dates of exhibition

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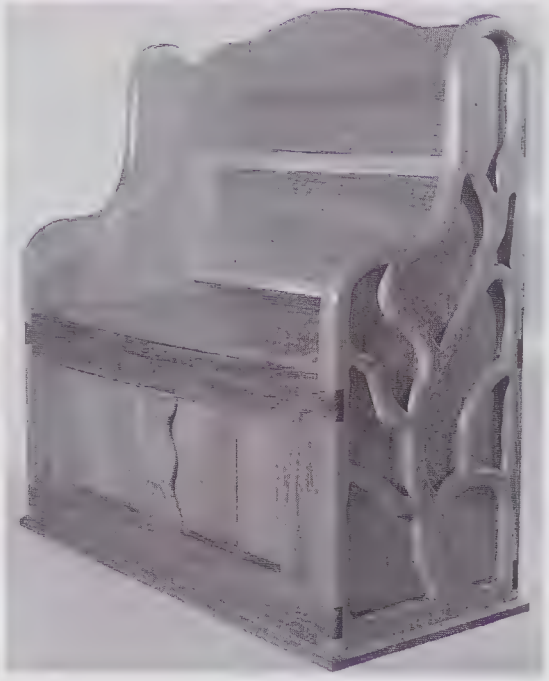

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1. **Marilyn Townsend.** *Old Homestead Kimono.* Silk, hand painted and embroidered. 1984. Post Office Gallery, Red Hill.

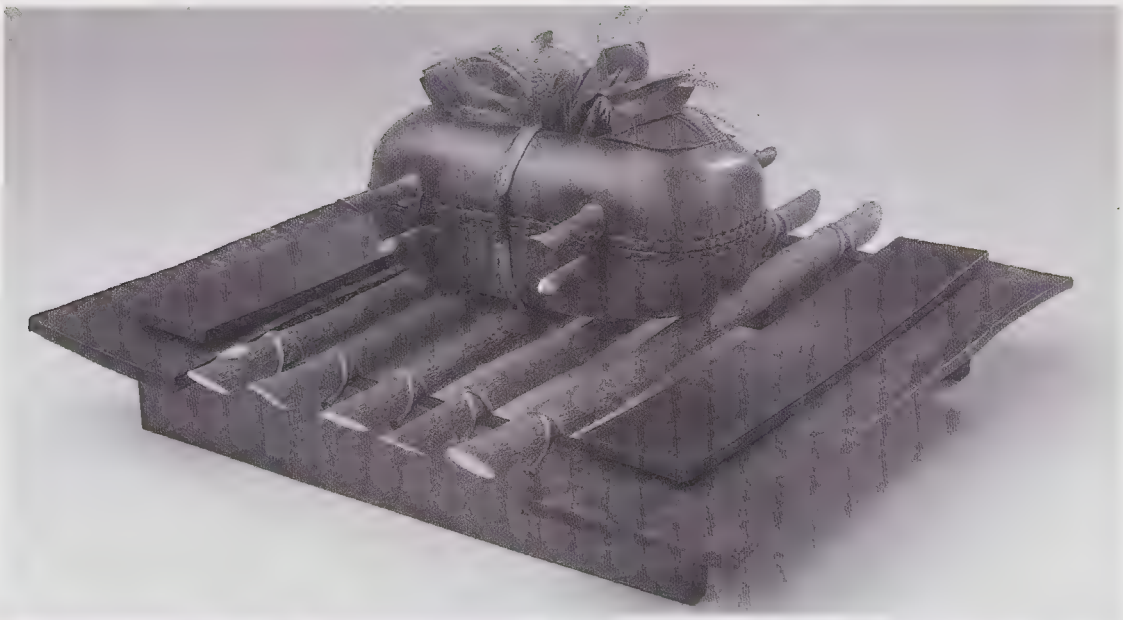
2. **Alan Lacovetsky.** *Stoneware vase.* Ash, clay and slate glaze. 27 cms. The Forest Community Art Centre, NSW.

3. **Audry Yoder Heatwole.** *Series of 3 coloured inlay porcelain forms.* 27, 30 and 32 cms high. Woolloomoolloo Gallery, Sydney.

4. **Ray Taylor.** *Raku pot.* Beaver Galleries, Canberra.

5. **John Tobin.** *Vine Settle.* Solid Blackwood. 1.050m high, 430mm wide, 1.0m long, thickness of sides 40mm. Lift up lid. Crafts Council of NSW Centre Gallery.

GALLERIES AND EXHIBITORS



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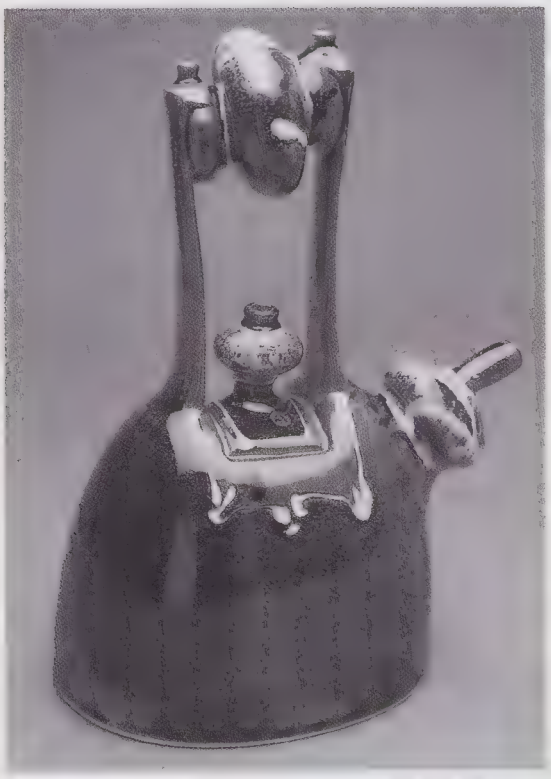

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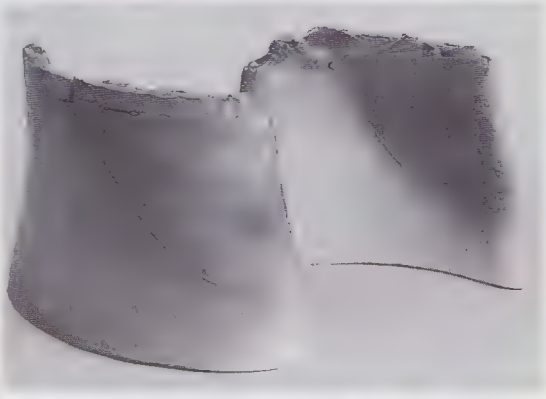

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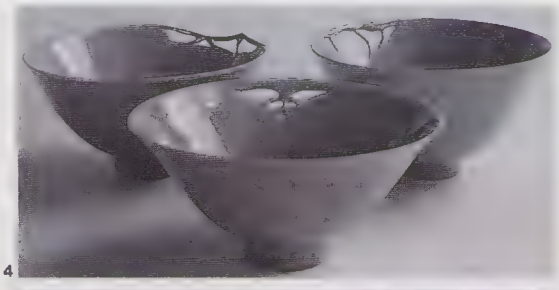

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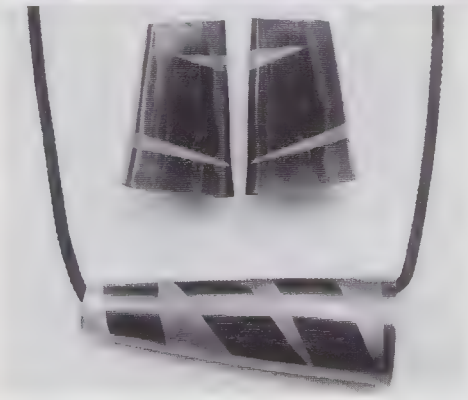

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1. **Ian White.** *Mixed media,* moulded leather, melaleuca, rawhide and feathers. 35 × 35 × 16 cms. approximately. Jam Factory Gallery, Adelaide, SA.
2. **Mark Warren.** *Stoneware Teapot. Tenmoku* and glaze trailing. 29 cms. Narek Galleries, Cuppacumbalong, ACT.
3. **Sue Moorhead.** *Striations V pair.* Sawdust fired, burnished and blackened. Crafts Council of the ACT gallery, Canberra, ACT.
4. **Ann Geroe.** *Pierced celadon glaze bowls,* stoneware. Birchgrove Fine Crafts, Hahndorf, SA. Photo John Stutchbury.
5. **Carolyn Delzoppo.** *Brooch Series.* Sterling and fine silver, *champlevé* and *cloisonné* enamel. 4.5 × 3 cms. 1984. Macquarie Galleries, Sydney.
6. **Barbara Swarbrick.** *Nude and Cushions* tray. Stoneware decorated with slips, underglazes and manganese dioxide. Clear glaze. 30 × 27 cms. Eltham Gallery, Victoria.
7. **Marion Marshall.** *Necklet and earrings.* Chrome plated steel with sandblasted detail. Beaver Galleries, ACT.

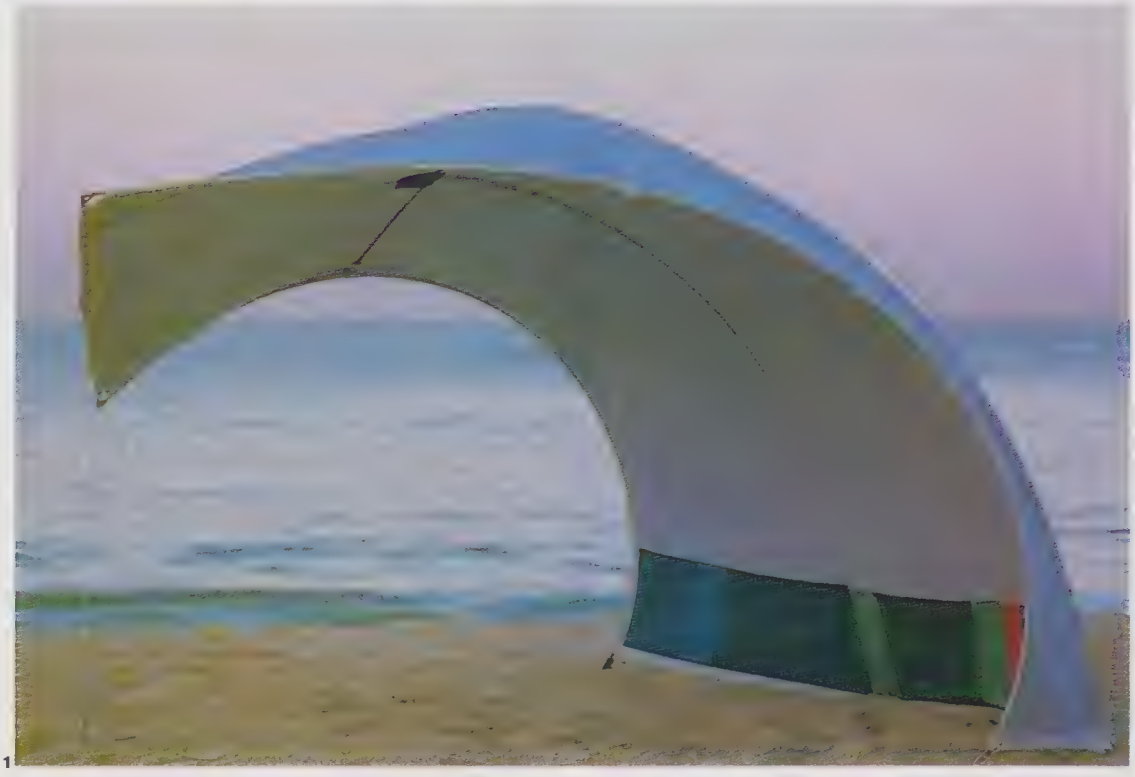
1. **Leslie Wright.** *Beach Shelter.* W.A.I.T. Degree Show 1985. Photo Leslie Wright.

2. **Jan Twyerould.** *Landscape Series.* Porcelain. Birchgrove Fine Crafts. Autumn, 1985.

3. **Bronwyn Goss.** *Spiral Pins.* W.A.I.T. Degree Show 1985. Photo Peter Edwards.

4. **David Whittle.** *Dinner Set detail.* W.A.I.T. Degree Show 1985. Photo John Bruin.

5. **Robyn Stewart.** *Porcelain.* Air-brushed. Australian Craftworks. 3 – 17 August, 1985.



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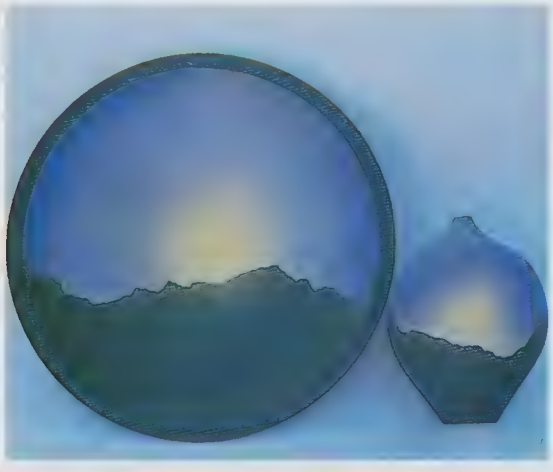

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1. **Dorothy Erickson.** *Shadows of the Cross.* Brass, nickel, copper, aluminium. Commission Methodist Ladies College, Claremont, WA.

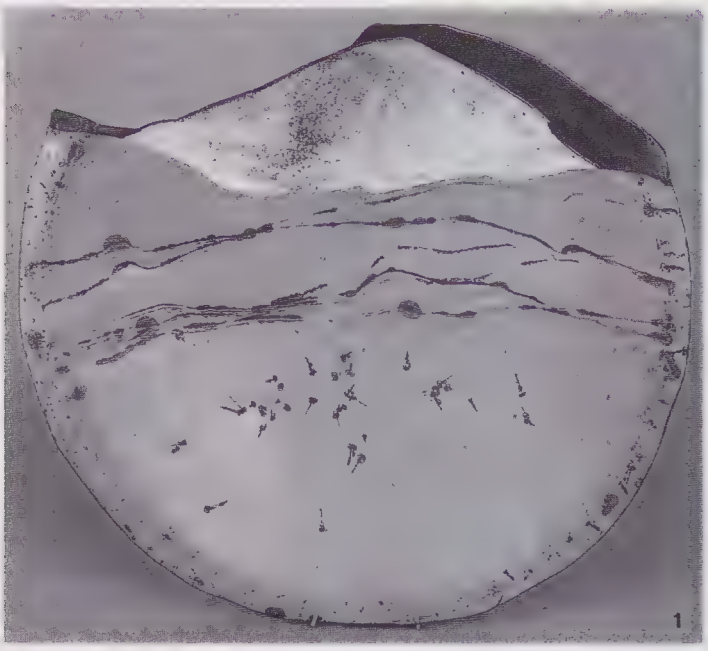
2. **Ann Brownsworth.** *One Way Journey* Brooch. Ivory, razor-fish shell, slate, silver. Alice Springs Acquisition Exhibition, Araluen Centre. 17 – 26 May.

3. **Willi Michalski.** *Eggs.* Stoneware with Tenmoku glaze and bamboo. The Potters Gallery. Photo Warwick Orme.

4. **Cathy Derksema, Linda Spowart.** *Raw Studio.* Dressed to Show fashion parade. Crafts Council of WA. 14 – 28 April.

5. **Tanya Walsh.** *Two-piece Suit.* Originality of Design Award. New England Wool Expo. April, 1985. Photo Barry MacKenzie.

GALLERIES AND EXHIBITORS



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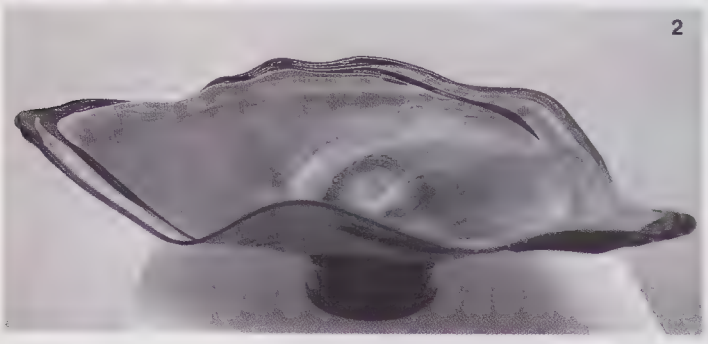

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1. **Colin Lee**. *Platter*. Laminated cowhide and kangaroo. 50 cms diameter. Lake Russell Gallery, Coffs Harbour.

2. **Colin Heaney**. *Handblown hot glass bowl*. 50 cms wide. Weswal Gallery, Tamworth.

3. **Michele Fermanis**. *City Limits* wallpiece. Fused metal and glass collage. Australian Craftworks, The Rocks, Sydney.

4. **John Daunt**. *Dining table* in New Guinea Rosewood. 3rd year degree student Canberra School of Art exhibition at Beaver Galleries, ACT.

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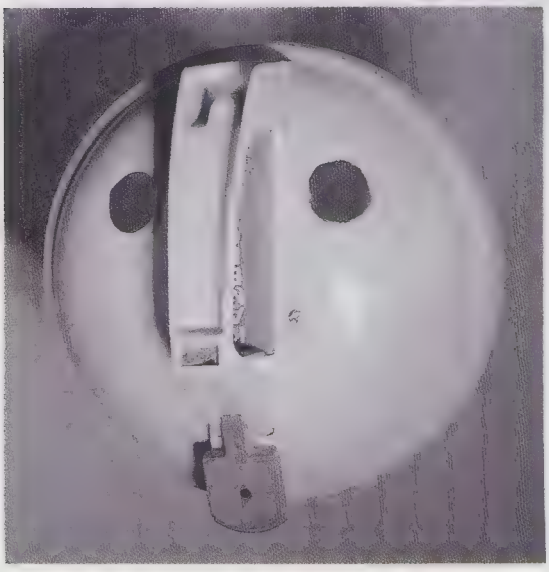

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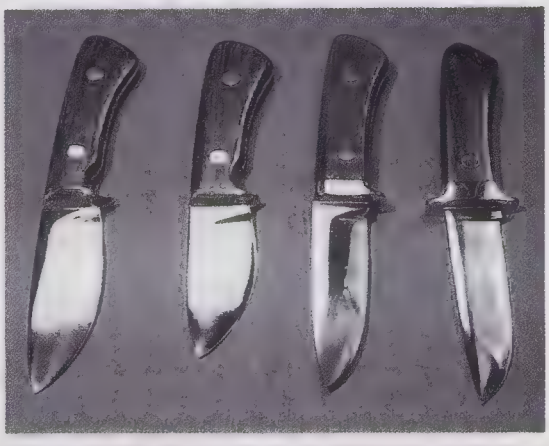

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1. **Theodore Tremblay.** *Urban Ceremonial Masks.* Hogarth Gallery, Sydney.

2. **Theodore Tremblay.** *Urban Ceremonial Masks.* Hogarth Gallery, Sydney.

3. **Gay Hawkes.** Dresser: *Australia Felix.* Red gum. Ray Hughes Gallery, Woollahra. 7 – 27 June.

4. **Stewart Rowe.** *Knives.* General purpose utility knives. Carbon steel, Rosewood handles.

5. **Chris Meyers.** *Decorated Bottle.* Scotchmer Gallery, North Fitzroy.

1. **Nina Macgeorge.** *City Lights.* 3D Canvas work. Textile Arts Certificate Exhibition, Embroiderer's Guild Gallery, Victoria. December 1984.

2. **Don Roberts.** *Pine Ant.* Warranah Woodcraft Gallery, Katoomba, NSW. Photo Roger Taggart.

3. **David Whittle.** *Cone Form.* Earthenware, stoneware, painted balsa, coil built. 68 x 31 cms. WAIT Craft Degree Show, December 1984. Photo John Bruin.

4. **Kate O'Sullivan and Phillip Noakes.** *Earrings.* Etched, stering silver with titanium. Studio Noko, Surry Hills, NSW.

5. **Faye Godfrey.** *Dragster.* Rug Hooking designed and hooked by Faye Godfrey. 65 x 85 cms. Salisbury Gallery, SA. July 1985.

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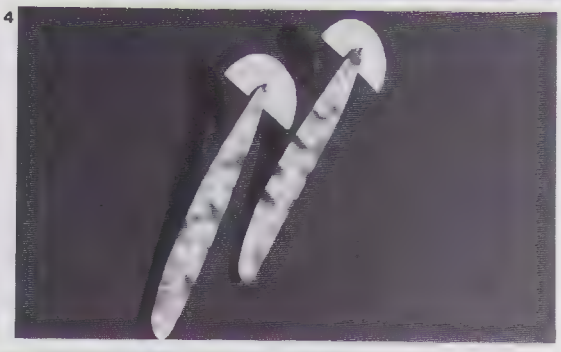

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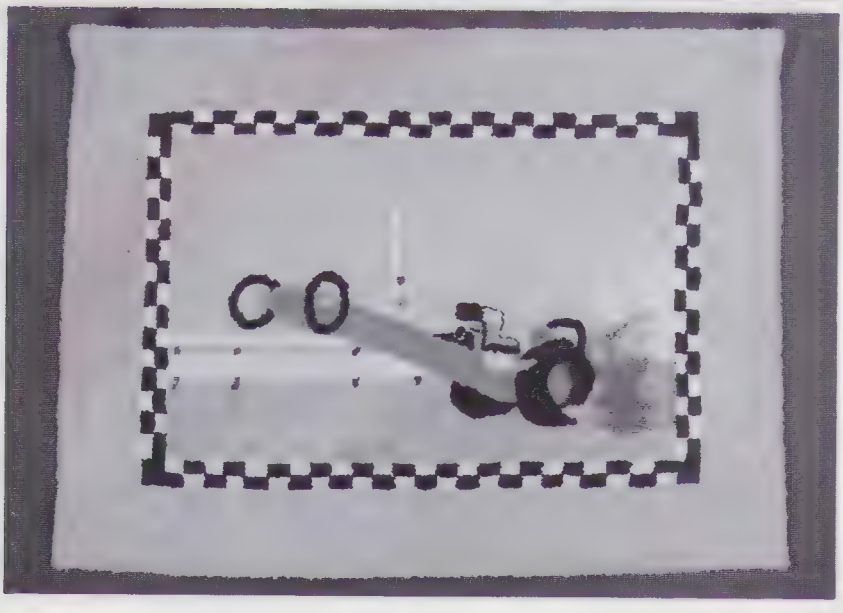

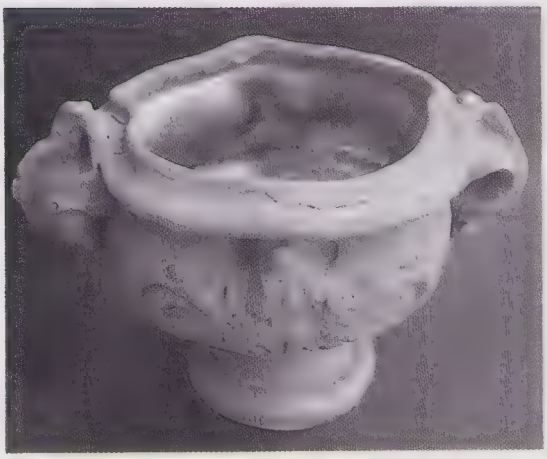

1. **Bronwyn Goss.** *Neckpiece.* Chainmail series, silver, silver and fused copper. 23 x 14 cms. WAIT Craft Degree Show, December 1984. Photo Peter Edwards.
2. **Peter Giordano.** *Pea Soup.* Porcelain and bone china. Jam Factory Gallery, Adelaide. July 1985.
3. **Simone Fraser.** *Ceramic Form.* Dry glaze. 20 cms. Canberra School of Art Gallery, June 1985.
4. **Elizabeth Lindsay.** *Tasselated.* Cotton, metallic, woven, folded. 20 x 9 cms. Ararat Gallery, January 1985.
5. **Alex Vintilla.** *Body Stole.* Leather, rubberised fabric, suede, net, dye, paint and pencil. 180 x 60 cms. WAIT Craft Degree Show, December 1984.

Vocal Art

Political Issues in Australian Craft

Nola Anderson

Social and political art. It's prerequisites are few: a critical response to the *status quo* and the aesthetic tools to express it. Beyond that it is as varied as its historic and artistic circumstances. It can be a detached observation or a life-long ambition. It can surface within a tradition or herald a radical aesthetic. It is at once peculiarly of its times and committed to changing them.

One of the most recent manifestations of such art in Australia has come from within the craft media, an area of the visual arts that has not commonly been known for its radical expression. It represents a significant challenge to craft aesthetics but paradoxically, it is also one of the most logical results of recent social and artistic developments.

During the last few decades the craft object has been freed from function. It has been freed, for that matter, from being an object at all. It has tapped into alternative materials. It was given licence to question accepted artistic and social traditions. It was allowed to assume intentions that went beyond its own physical presence.

Put all that into a society that accepts and even encourages a critical investigative role for its artists and the time is ripe for the emergence of craftspeople who use their media to explore contemporary social and political ideas.

With less emphasis on function, the artist was free to go beyond issues of appropriate design and form. Freedom from function was accompanied by the growing interest in craft as sculptural object. Early explorations in American funk ceramics, in particular the work of Robert Arneson, were significant here. The sculptural object could now express the idea. Jewellery, another example, fell very easily into these new possibilities, perhaps because its traditional 'functions' had not specified a particular construction.

Alternative materials provided a broad vocabulary of signs and symbols. To use alternative materials became in itself a statement about traditions. Alternative materials were a rich source of expression through association. Pieces of the physical environment could be used. Objects were taken from their normal environment and isolated, a *neo-Dada* effect. Some materials, plastics for example, came complete with built-in social commentary. Other materials, especially new metal alloys, were offshoots of modern technology. At one end of the spectrum the wide range of materials meant a rich expressive vocabulary. At the other end, where installations used real objects, the choice of material would become irrelevant.

The crafts also became part of a broader aesthetic discussion, embodied in part by the art/craft debate. That debate has been sustained by the craft object's role as an expressive object, a medium for carrying the artist's ideas. Once that role was established, it was a short step to social and political commentary.

It is the logical integration of artistic and social developments, or processes stemming directly from historical and contemporary events that makes this phenomenon such an obvious part of the 1980's. Where a single style is no longer possible, where innovation supercedes tradition and the idea is as important as the fact of making, 'vocal' art is a perfectly logical solution.

The issues addressed in such work are very much of our times. Nuclear war, women's status, the environment. Hand in hand come the explorations that are very much part of our artistic times, new technology, installation pieces, multi-sensory displays and traditional mediums seen with new perspectives. The incidence is too great to be a coincidence. Crafts addressing social and political issues are also questioning their own place within the perceived traditional craft system.

The craftsperson's role has been questioned; issues of elitism discussed. A need is sensed to communicate with a broad audience. Jewellery, for example, has shown some dramatic changes, with a new emphasis on communication, whole body ornament and a reversal of precious metal values. Ceramics, with an existing tradition of the sculptural or graphic object, has had a less formal revolution through a no less radical philosophical change. Mixed media has come into its own.

Within the various contemporary political and social developments that have given 'vocal' art some impetus, the women's movement has been one of the most energetic and most conscientiously organised. The establishment of the Womens' Art Movement (W.A.M.) organisations in Australia in the 1970s provided a working base for investigating aspects of women's historical role in the arts as well as promoting women's current achievements.

Further moves to improve women's 'visibility' within the arts were exemplified by the establishment of the Women's Art Register in 1975 and the 'Women's Art Register Extension Project' in 1976. Publication of articles and books on women artists and the interest in feminist art criticism, inspired by developments within the United States, has added to the art community's ability and desire to explore the relevant issues.

Crafts addressing social and political issues are also questioning their own place within the perceived traditional craft system.

As far as I can see, the women's movement's greatest impact on the crafts has been in two main areas: the re-evaluation of women's 'domestic' crafts, and the emergence of articulate craftspeople addressing feminist issues through contemporary work.

The former issue has raised some fairly critical debate, as indicated by the various responses to the *Quantum Leaps Quilt Exhibition*, organised in 1982 in conjunction with the W A.M. s *Quantum Leaps* month of arts activities.[1]

The show emphasised the viewpoint that women's art had been largely ignored by male-oriented art history. In the catalogue, the exhibition of traditional and contemporary quilts was intended to create a tribute to women's work and a recognition of that work as a fundamental source of women's art.

A simple enough proposition and the show became a major public attraction. But it also prompted some discussion that went beyond the quality of the work and examined the message presented by the 'fact' of the exhibition itself. Could such a show provide a reassessment of women's work as art or did the quilts 'simply reinforce an existing stereotype'[2]? Were new roles established for this work by placing it in a gallery? To which 'status' of art should these

works aspire? Far from being politically intentioned works in their own right, these quilts assumed political significance through the mechanics of an exhibition.

Even more issues emerged from the movement. The role of feminist art criticism, the question of where to exhibit, the dilemma of democratic art versus some sort of selected standard and the special relevance that craft has to women's history have all found a place in the debate.

The *D'Oyley Show*, at Watters Gallery in 1979, celebrated another manifestation of women's achievement outside mainstream fine arts. The show was co-ordinated by members of the Women's Domestic Needlework Group, Franmces Budden, Joan Grounds, Bernadette Krone, Kathy Letray, Patricia McDonald, Marie McMahon, Noela Taylor and Loretta Vieceli. It presented a large collection of dóylies based on traditional patterns which have become a basic language for the medium.

As 'women's work', produced within a female community, rich in the 'complex language of needlework symbology',[3] the whole show was also a political statement about the status of women's work. Again it was a case of the exhibition being the major political vehicle since, with a few exceptions, the majority of exhibits in their original domestic context would have had no such political intent.

Political intent. That is the second major craft consequence of the women's movement. Contemporary artists now choose to explore women's issues through their artwork, even though not all would admit alliance to any particular feminist grouping.

Recent work in this field, in particular by Catherine Truman, Anne Van Sebille, Lorraine Hepburn and Bronwyn Kemp has shown that ideology can sit comfortably with artistic integrity.

But is that always the case? Some little while ago critics were urging craftspeople to avoid the seductive fascination of materials. In the wake of the extensive questioning of the 'object beautiful' that accompanied the interest in concept and expression, that danger has been greatly diffused. It is quite possible however that seduction by idea could take its place. What is the line that divides art and propaganda? Need there, in fact, be a line? Can a social or political viewpoint be a fad in art? The only workable yardstick here lies not in definitions but in the already overworked concept of an artist's integrity, or at least our contemporary understanding of it.

Just how artistic integrity is recognised in the case of social and political work is similar to criteria applied to contemporary artwork in general. There is a sensitivity to materials, an awareness of visual messages, a rigorous working-out of expressive values, the artist's perceived commitment and intention. But is there an additional value for social and political work? Is there a valve that concerns itself with how articulate that message is, or to what extent it permits or denies other aesthetic values? I suggest that question depends very much on the nature of the work itself, as the language an artist uses can vary from the familiar one of form and symbol to the more direct appeal to the senses and emotions of large scale installations. The artist's own emphasis should be some gauge for evaluation.

'Thoughts into Flesh', jewellery by Catherine Truman and Ann Van Sebille, used the language of form, symbol and materials, one which was quite easily 'readable' and which did provoke some very strong public responses, both positive and negative.[4]

For some, the overt gynaecological references in Van Sebille's pieces was quite shocking. I doubt it was the aesthetic formula that shocked as much as the subject matter encapsulated in something meant to be worn in public.

During the last few decades the craft object has been freed from function. It has been freed, for that matter, from being an object at all.

Broadly speaking, the work explored various interactions between women and technology. The emphasis was investigative, not dogmatic, particularly in pieces such as Catherine Truman's organic panel that explored woman's historical role in agriculture and production. Truman's sensitivity to materials provided the link between the work's formal and 'political' success.

Anne Van Sebille's brooches were extraordinary in their ability to raise issues that went far beyond their specific themes. But I found two things that were most extraordinary about them. They were sensitively designed and visually very appealing. Yet, their quite specific referenced to contraceptive devices and the technical trappings of gynaecology had the capacity to evoke the reactions mentioned above. Neither aesthetic expression nor ideology had been sacrificed, they were synonymous.

The ideological power of the piece was based on airing in an artistic public arena, things that are normally discussed behind white closed doors. But Van Sebille also fully exploited the expressive power of her medium through a sensitive language of form and material.

One feature which this exhibition had in common with others pursuing social/political themes was the complete 'orchestration' of the display. The context in which the pieces were viewed contributed to the theme. Van Sebille's brooches, for example, were pinned on gauze drapes moulded by latex solution into female body forms. This physically specific setting was much more evocative than a museum box. It also clarified the themes dealt with in the individual pieces, the public significance of the triangular brooch; the IUD hieroglyphics.

In other exhibitions the 'orchestration' approach has included substantial amounts of large format printed matter and explanatory photographs. *Worn Issues*, work by nine Australian jewellers, adopted this technique (*Craft Australia*. 1984/4. Summer). It's supporting material did clarify and expand the issues, but it did not particularly assist the inherent expressive power of the objects. The whole phenomenon of exhibition arrangement is one which has close links with the emergence of social/political craft and has broadened, or even introduced, the concept of 'exhibition evaluation' in addition to the works within it.

To quote another example, for Lorraine Hepburn's *Quilt and Sheet Show*[5] the exhibition's format *was* the means of communication. And again, like Truman and Van Sebille, the greatest impact resulted from locating quite specific subject matter in an unfamiliar form and context. Enlarged versions of articles from the popular press were hand-printed onto double bed size quilts. Topics covered included rape, incest, domestic violence and other related issues. The final result was less of a challenge to public expectations than Van Sebille's work because the familiar magazine format of the original articles acted as a buffer. Hepburn balanced the symbolic language of the quilts with their emotional and sexual connotations, against the harsher reality of women's experience. As in much of Hepburn's work the emphasis was on communication between object and viewer and the work's formal elements were a means to that end.

Hepburn's mixed media construction *The Day I Gave Up Biscuits Forever* is an earlier work investigating the influence that fashion and public expectation has on women's self image. *Test Strip to 1980*, another mixed media construction, was a more personal exploration of female roles and values. Hepburn's recent work has explored issues less specifically related to women although she has maintained an interest in aspects of our immediate urban environment.

Fantasy, humour and popular narrative come to the fore in Bronwyn Kemp's recent *papier mâché* work[6] which represents quite a formal change from her previous ceramic work. Kemp's method, based on the invention of a loveable, daredevil humanoid duck named Beryl, relies on the viewer's intuitive response to this *papier mâché* heroine. From the reviews it was obvious that the lighthearted mood struck the right chord.[7]

Peter Hook's *Anzac* series takes a pointed look at Australia's historical experiences and shows that while the potential for human destruction is now greater, its ironies in terms of human sacrifice remain an historic constant.

One of the most spectacular exhibitions to confront more universal themes of war was *Forces of Resilience*, held at the Adelaide Jam Factory during the 1984 Adelaide Festival (*Craft Australia*, 1984/3. Spring). The scale of massive nuclear destruction, with its unlimited tragedy, was here matched by every persuasive device the arts can muster.

Reviewers often referred to the show's powerful sense of theatre and it was obvious that the show succeeded in its efforts to address the viewers' emotions, senses and intellect.

The role that objects played within each of the three installations by Ian Were, Marcus Champ and Mark Thompson was quite varied and proved some yardstick for the mood of the three works. Ian Were's piece was 'Helmets for WW IV', nine fantasy helmets created for the absurdity but inevitability of human conflict following WW III (*Craft Australia*. 1985/3. Winter). The irony is that Were's helmets are beautiful. Absurd, damning, but beautiful. Were makes his comment with the lightness of whimsy and the edge of sarcasm.

A helmet is designed for its intended owner: a stunningly eccentric steel and pop riveted number for the Milliner; a richly ornate *One for the Rose* (a reference to the Red Cross nurse and the song *Rose of No Man's Land*); a cardboard, paper and spray paint helmet for religious wars. Or on the other hand, when everything else about war makes little sense, why not a helmet inspired by the artist's fascination with a pink Ford Thunderbird *coupé?*

The whole phenomenon of exhibition arrangement is one which has close links with the emergence of social/political craft . . .

Kemp suspended Beryl and colleagues from the ceiling. There they performed daredevil feats in flight with gay abandon. They ignored rules of taste as well as gravity. Papier mâché and bright primaries gave the whole thing a circus mood of which I think Beryl would have been proud.

In the reviews I have read it was interesting to note that Kemp's work was not evaluated in the first instance by formalist criteria. Beryl the Duck did not provoke any lengthy discussion of balance, proportion, even formal irony or symbolic language, expressive use of colour, sensitive handling of medium *etc.* Critical response focused on the mood and ideologies that Beryl embodied, not her physical presence. The change in artistic focus to include formal object and message was reflected in its evaluation.

While there is an increasing body of craftwork that has addressed women's issues, the most widely addressed issues have been the implications of war and the demise of the natural environment. This has included work with a particularly Australian emphasis as well as a more international perspective.

Close to home, Vincent McGrath's recent ceramics have grown from the artist's impressions of the Northern Territory (*Craft Australia,* 1984/4. Summer). Some works from this series have focused on the aggressive intrusion that the hardware of war makes on that environment, both human and physical.

Marcus Champ's installation, *Star Wars*, was the most overtly emotive, contrasting the innocence of children against the violence of war. Champ constructed a tunnel that directed observers past a line of children's tricycles, accompanied by the children's voices yelling urgently to their parents to 'come quickly.' Around the bend a large suspended missile comes into view, with the roar of engines and flashing lights. Behind the missile the tricycles are smashed and charred in a jumbled mess, and the back wall carries the text of Ronald Reagan's Star Wars speech on a moving text display.

Champ's work is so clearly directed to elic iting an emotive response that it requires some reassessment of aesthetic critical values. It also exemplifies the discussion with which critical writing must come to terms when dealing with such 'intentions'. Formalist criticism is clearly inadequate. The artist has not used the physical elements of this work as an end in themselves. The whole installation is directed toward provoking audience response. Does the criteria then become how well the work does its job?

Mark Thompson's *Victims, Survivors and Monument Maquettes* provided a middle course between the two previous works. Theatre, emotion, multi-sensory installation were used, but in conjunction with the formal language of sculpture.

On either side of the room strewn with gum leaves, the artist placed his 'victims', 'survivors' and 'monument' *maquettes*. Peter Ward described the two former series as

small tombstones topped by faces, with the victims having the faces of children and friends and the survivors being 'fat, gross and misshapen'.[8]

The 15 *maquettes* for munments developed Thompson's irony. Among the 'casualties' of war we are invited to mourn are Woman, Truth, Reason and Self Respect, Decency, ·tice, Innocence, Humour, Strength and Grace.
·on brings home the irony of his message by using 'signs' such as the *maquettes'* reference to the ıas in the Australian War Memorial and the heroic ty of classical art. The formal languages popularly ɔciated with beauty and heroism make the human gedy of war that much cruder.[9]

Forces of Resilience's advantage was its sense of theatre. The strength of each work was magnified within its manipulated environment. It is not a method which is open to all craft forms. Jewellery, for instance, has been used to address the nuclear issue but has done so within the more specific parameteres of that art form, in particular, its special relationship to the human body. A piece of jewellery must usually contain all its message within itself, without recourse to large scale environmental devices, if it is to maintain its meaning while being worn.

Artists have solved this problem in a number of ways. Sue Lorraince's recent work[10] makes the message a game, something akin to those toys where tiny balls are juggled into tiny holes. There are word/image games (Yellow Cake Brooches), exercises in irony (memorabilia capsules), and harsher presentations in symbol and sarcasm (Cover Up Games).

The work acknowledges the intimate nature of jewellery and uses that scale to its own ends. It is a less complex process than that at work within *Forces of Resilience* and it appeals more directly to conceptual irony.

Nine Sydney jewellers presented their solutions to jewellery as message in *Worn Issues*, an exhibition of low cost jewellery relating to environmental issues. The work for this show grew out of a series of workshops in 1983, which in turn followed on from experiences the various artists had had during the 1982 Women and Arts Festival.

The exhibition developed some quite specific viewpoints about the role and form of jewellery, and about humankind's actions within the environment. There was a shared concern for the liberties taken with natural resources, the need to reconsider our place within the natural environment, and the need to literally reshape jewellery to make it both expressive and accessible. Jewellery's relationship to the human form was explored with particular reference to three-dimensional possibilities.

The close relationship that existed between social message and the radical re-assessment of formal traditions used to express them highlighted a point of interest relevant to much of the new 'vocal art'.

For the artists, the process of group workshops and the exploration of themes and re-evaluation of form led to some extremely satisfying work. Alternative materials proved to be highly expressive and economically non-elitist. The form of the jewellery was eminently suited to its expressive intention. But it was by necessity and design, an *avant garde* aesthetic, as is much contemporary social/political work. And this aesthetic determines which audience will be able to respond to or interpret the message. The point is not a criticism of the work's aesthetic values but it does underline the fact that such work by itself can rarely function as message for the masses. It is, and properly so, an artist's expression.[11]

While ceramics, mixed media and jewellery seem to dominate the vocal art at this point, there are artists who have explored such possibilities in other mediums. Bronwyn Kemp's *papier mâché* work has already been mentioned. Gay Hawke's furniture is another instance and is particularly fascinating because the expression is embodied within a functional object.

Hawke's furniture in *The Trembling Stranger and other Bush Furniture*[12] expressed the artist's enchantment with the eccentric beauty of the rainforest, her disenchantment with the plundering of resources and a deep awareness of history and its legacy.

The pieces that deal with environmental irresponsibility are, fittingly enough, stark and blunt. *Terra Australia*, with its thin skeleton of sticks, and *King Island* similarly stark and unforgiving, are Hawke's monument to a landscape that has been lost to commercial productivity. Even without the specific references of such pieces, Hawke's ability to evoke the particular mystery and beauty of wild rainforest or natural scrub is in itselfa sufficiently full statement.

When discussing socially commmitted art in Australia in the 1930s and 40s, Charles Merewether notes in his exhibition catalogue **Art and Social Commitment** the use of the human body as the central motif, the symbol which carried the force of the human predicament. Historically the human figure has embodied the artist's social message, from the symbol and collage of Picasso's *Guernica* to the explicit narrative of the German George Grosz or the photography of Robert Capa.

One of the most distinctive features of such work in the craft mediums is the possibility of working without the human figure. There is a greater reliance on theatre, the interaction of materials, on images and popular associations, user participation and even ironies of function. Philosophic perspectives are more generally those of the 80s: the edge of sarcasm that will permit humour, future apprehension amidst present indignation. Pre-eminently there is a desire to question. For the crafts that means its own aesthetic tradition as much as its society's predicaments.

1. For a more detailed overview of these discussions see Ailsa Maxwell, 'Quilts: Sentimental Feminism?', and letter and reply to Editor, in **Setting the Pace, The Women's Art Movement** 1980-1983. WAM 1984 pp 58-60.
2. *Ibid.*
3. Rachel Maines, 'FAncywork: The Archaelology of Lives', quoted in *The D'Oyley Show* catalogue, p4.
4. *Craft Australia* 1985/3 (Winter).
5. ***Quilt and Sheet Show***. Adelaide Festival Centre Gallery, 1982, subsequently toured within Australia.
6. *New Works in Papier Mâché.* Jam Factory Gallery. Nov. 1984. and Bronwyn Kemp at Devise Gallery 1984.
7. For a review of the Adelaide show see John Neylon, "Krazy Komix', in **Adelaide Review** Nov. 1984.
8. Peter Ward. **Australian** March 9, 1984.
9. For a fuller description and discussion of this work see Peter Ward, Ibid.
10. Works by Sue Lorraine. Makers Mark Gallery.. May 1984.
11. For a discussion of this concept with reference to the work of Barnett Newman, see 'Utopian colour: Anarchism and the art of Barnett Newman', in Annette Cox, **Art-as-Politics, The Abstract Expressionist Avant-Garde and Society** UMI Research Press. 1982.
13. *The Trembling Stranger and Other Bush Furniture. Bush furniture by Gay Hawkes. Adelaide Festival Centre Gallery. Oct – Nov. 1983.*
14. Charles Merewether, ***Art and Social Commitment. An end to the city of dreams. 1931-1948.*** *Art Gallery of NSW. 1984.*

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Eight Years On . . .

The Meat Market Craft Centre

Peta Landman

Enter the glass double doors of the Meat Market Craft Centre and you are immediately struck by the sensitively restored timber-arched ceiling and cobbled stones of the Market Hall. The soft greens, ochres and deep brown of the original colour scheme complement the carefully retained details such as the meat hooks, cast-iron bulls' heads and original signwriting, all overseen by the plaster bust of William Reynolds, founder of the Metropolitan Meat Market Company.

From Meat Market to Craft Centre has been a long story of perseverance and foresight. Marjorie Johnson, General Manager of the Centre considers this is now the most comprehensive crafts centre in Australia, bringing together a diverse group of activities catering for all areas of the arts and crafts. Her enthusiasm and dedication have seen the project through since its inception in 1974.

For 96 years the building has been the largest privately owned meat market in Victoria. When it was passed in at auction in 1974 a lobby was set up on behalf of the craft movement to try to convince the government to buy it.

'We saw the need for a greater interaction between craftspeople, promotion through sales and exhibitions and the need for workshops to help bridge the gap between training and professionalism, with the right building it was felt that we could satisfy all these needs', explained Marjorie.

Two years of representation finally convinced Rupert Hamer, then Premier of Victoria and also the Treasurer and Minister of the Arts, of the need for a feasibility study. The government finally agreed to buy it in January 1977.

'The government thought it was not only timely to increase support to the arts', said Marjorie, 'but there was also the need to save an historic building'.

In September 1978 the Premier agreed to fund the establishment of the Centre, Marjorie was appointed in early 1979 as Interim Manager and the Centre was opened in November 1979 with a staff of two.

'From '79 on we started to establish activities', Marjorie said. 'We had exhibitions, set up the shop and the ceramic and textile workshop. We couldn't do too much after that as the other areas were unusable. Up to that point we had had very little money for capital works. Luckily the government decided at the end of '83 that they would give the money to restore the Meat Market as one of their projects for Victoria's 150th anniversary year. Construction and restoration works started in '84 and culminated in the completion of restoration of the Market Hall in March '85 and the remaining works in September '85'.

The renovations have cost 2½ million. When added to the initial purchase price of $890,000, it doesn't amount to very much for a building that takes up a whole block and contains three levels.

There has been some criticism that the Centre's location doesn't encourage a passing crowd; that people have to make a special trip to visit it. Marjorie acknowledges that part of her job will be to make it much better known, but says that it is just far enough out of town to find parking space, yet close enough to get to and is on the main route to and from the airport.

In the early days various committees were set up and talked to the different craft groups to find out what was needed. The idea was to restore the building to its original form. Decisions on new building works were gradually made by consultation.

The various areas more or less suggested themselves, the first floor was suitable for administration and the basement for the workshops: 'The unique character of this building is that just by chance it has all the different spaces that a craft centre needs', Marjorie said. 'It even includes a separate building which was used to house the horse-drawn vehicles, which is perfect for hot-glass workshops, keeping these separate from the main timber-lined building. The basement areas are great for metal and wood, isolating the noise and providing street access. And the main Market

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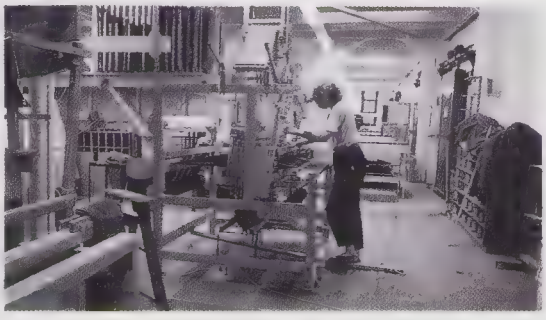

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Hall is great for display and for clean activities such as the textile workshops and those things which are not pollutant.'

'On the Blackwood Street side there are areas big enough to put a new gallery for the State Collection; improved accommodation for the Crafts Council of Victoria and also room for the Victorian Ceramic Group. The first floor of the hotel will be office accommodation for three crafts groups.'

The other groups that will be housed in the building are the Hand Weavers and Spinners Guild, the Australian Lace Guild and the Arts Crafts Teachers' Association. With these major crafts groups concentrated in one area, it is hoped that the Centre will become a natural focus for craftspeople. To help foster this concept, an area has been put aside to be used as a conference room.

The popularity of the Meat Market for craftspeople and the general public is further enhanced by the Victorian State Craft Collection as well as the shops, access workshops and a gallery space.

Victorian State Craft Collection

The first exhibition staged at the Centre came from the Victorian State Craft Collection. The collection was started in 1977 for the Arts Victoria Festival of 1978. The collection is directed to acquiring contemporary works by craftspeople resident in Australia. Up to March 1985 the Collection consisted of 308 works, strongly represented in the area of ceramics, but also including important pieces of metalwork, jewellery, hot and flat glass, textiles and woodcrafts.

The Acquisitions Sub-committee at present consists of six professional craftspeople, a representative of the National Gallery of Victoria, the Curator of the Victorian State Craft Collection, and the Meat Market Craft Centre's General Manager. They are assisted by eight craftspeople/advisers. A total of $15,000 has been allocated each year by the Government and the Craft Board of the Australia Council for continuing acquisitions with the aim of preventing the Collection from becoming static.

The display at the Meat Market is continually rotated and many of the pieces are loaned for travelling exhibitions and to regional galleries.

Access Workshop Programme

An innovative aspect of the Craft Centre has been the development of Access Workshops. These are designed to provide fully equipped workshops for craftspeople whose work requires space or equipment not otherwise available to them. A total of about 50-60 craftspeople can be accommodated in the areas of ceramics, textiles, wood, leather and cold glass. There still remains vacancies in many of the workshops but Marjorie expects this to change when the opportunities become better known.

It is envisaged that the users could be recent graduates, craftspeople from interstate or overseas in the process of relocating, craftspeople wishing to develop a new technique or medium or a craftsperson working on special one-off projects or commissions. They are meant for artists who have already achieved a considerable level of achievement.

Fees vary between about $35 and $40 a week and the spaces are available for up to a year with possible extensions of two to three months. An additional eight spaces supplied only with water are also available.

An example of the type of equipment available in the workshops is the ceramic workshop. It has a 60 cubic foot natural gas kiln, a 15 cubic foot electric kiln, a gas test kiln, dough mixer, de-airing pugmill, platform scales, three electric wheels, a large spray and extraction booth, a compressor and spray guns, glaze scales and plenty of storage space and work areas.

Although the area is not seen as an educative, it is thought that craftspeople working there will obtain a lot of experience from working alongside other people. Each workshop has a Workshop Supervisor, an experienced practitioner, who is available for advice. There is also the

1. The new edition of the Meat Market.
2. The past edition.
3. The Blackwood Street entrance with the access gallery to the right.
4. Australian Crafts 1985 invitational exhibit.
5. The Victorian State Craft Collection Gallery.
6. Workshop programme for textiles.
7. The Craft Shop.

Continued on page 116

TOM VUDRAG, RECENT BATIKS. *The Alfred Street Community Arts Centre Galleries, Cairns. 6 - 9 July, 1985.*

'This exhibition was designed to display and explore the various types of batik, both traditional and contemporary'. Tom Vudrag has used his technical skills in the batik medium well, having trained in Indonesia in 1979-80. He currently teaches and coordinates the batik course for the Vocational Art and Craft Course at the College of TAFE, Cairns.

No artist could hope for a better gallery to present one's first ever exhibition, so it was with a tinge of sadness that I viewed one aspect of this show: finish.

Beautiful silk cloth was used for these pieces. But the dowel rods with cheap plastic ends, poor sewing of hems (most crooked; one even back to front), and omission of the artist's signature on some work did not help bring this exhibition up to the standards of its surroundings.

The use of lovely, vibrant colours in some of the designs really drew one's attention, but in some cases the drawing was poor. Maybe next time these problems will be considered and resolved.

Lorraine Rankin is a handweaver from Cairns.

CERAMICS IN QUEENSLAND COLLECTIONS. *Darling Downs Institute of Advanced Education Gallery, Toowoomba. Curator, Bruce Anderson. July, 1985.*

This is a review of an idea. The exhibition itself was eclectic, educational, well selected and well presented. Works were loaned from the Queensland Art Gallery, Queensland Potters Association private collections and so on; about sixty pieces were shown. The emphasis was on the contemporary. The exhibition proved easy to organize, no grants required, no big dramas, just getting on with a good idea. Why doesn't it happen more often? What other craft objects old and new could we see if we did not sit back and wait for the big productions to come our way? It's also very useful for potential collectors to get this kind of overview, to see what others consider worthy, to compare styles, to see how works are holding up to the test of time.

The Queensland Potters Association deserves some extra congratulatory remarks, for having a long standing acquisition policy and a very nice little collection as a result. And the Darling Downs Association for Advanced Education (linked to the Institute) has also made some good purchases from pottery tutors who have taught at the annual McGregor Summer School, organized by the Association. We must be reaching the point where not only the makers' but the buyers' decision-making can be critiqued and exhibited.

Janet De Boer is an Editor and craftswoman.

THE 1985 BOUGAINVILLEA FESTIVAL MUD AND RAG SHOW. *Esplanade Gallery, Darwin. 9 – 23 June.*

A non-festive exhibition of domestic pottery with brighter weaving.

Three potters, Annette Copland, Maureen Spencer, Debra Wight demonstrated some confusion between the roles of function and decoration. Their bowls, teasets, casseroles, mugs were conventional in shape, glaze and colour. First impressions were of a c.1970 display, pleasant and 'little-brown-coffee-mug'-ish. Attempts at brush stroke or stencil decoration were mostly unsuccessful.

Brush lines didn't flow gracefully over curved shapes and drab colours were used. Stencils varied from Territory bird life to plant forms that looked plonked-on.

If these potters are to continue such decoration they need more practice.

Maureen Spencer's light celadon bowls managed this combination. Annette Copland's two pit-fired vases in volcanic colours dominated with their boldness. Her lidded containers were awkwardly proportioned, and their handles suited to wrought iron rather than clay.

Suzy Furness wove silk, cotton, linen into fashionable tropical blouses. She came near to creating an alternative to off-the-peg clothes. I would like to see her use more vivacious patterns in clothing lengths instead of so many wispy belts and scarves.

Rosamund Griffiths is a teacher and art historian.

GARRY GREENWOOD. *Handmark Winter Show. Handmark Gallery, Hobart. 7–31 July.*

Garry Greenwood is certainly a master of his medium,leather. His treatment of leather is a three-dimensional doodle, the lines are flowing, smooth and seamless; pieces ask to be stroked. They tip-toe, however, along a very fine thong between graceful and 'biological' in flavour (not that the two are mutually exclusive). The latter is a little hard to come to terms with when confronted with the urge to stroke (**and** in public).

One does not warm to the works, other than being amused and amazed at their contortions. Some pieces have a rather 'over-stuffed' quality which, when coupled with a little too obtrusive brassy technical wizardry, leaves one with an impression of soul-less over-slickness.

One of the great qualities of leather is suppleness, and Greenwood's pieces have a tendency to appear frozen: once supple but now dead. 'Thistle Horn', his largest and most convoluted piece has, in its extended body, much of the impact of a recently killed snake, one marvels at its flowing form, while remaining aware that its spirit is gone.

Greenwood, nevertheless, continues to expand his own technical vocabulary and, in consequence, that of others in the field.

Susan Malm is a ***Craft Australia*** contributor

ROBYN GORDON. BODY ADORNMENTS AND TALISMANS. *Crafts Council of Tasmania Gallery, Hobart. 1–19 July.*

Robyn Gordon has taken what was initially, at least, a play medium and placed it firmly in the realm of 'serious' jewellery. Having seen in recent years a rash of gaudy and sometimes clumsy, funk jewellery made from mouldable plastic, Robyn Gordon's body adornments and talismans are a refreshing and stimulating surprise. This malleable plastic may assume a number of surfaces and 'values' and as such is open to almost unlimited employment in this field. Robyn's work takes full advantage of these qualities.

Those pieces presented in boxes however, appear somewhat under-resolved, although the strong element of play (with which the medium remains connected) is certainly welcome. These works are reminiscent of the 'little worlds' constructed by children in shoeboxes and Gordon's photographic backdrops serve to add to this illusion.

The works combine found natural 'treasures' such as shells with materials which have been less readily accepted for use in jewellery. In this context, the rainbow-coloured and highly detailed plastic elements serve the same role as that played by precious metals in traditional jewellery and in turn accentuate the precious nature of the embedded objects.

Susan Malm is a ***Craft Australia*** contributor.

PAPER-INTEGRATION OF PROCESS AND IMAGE, *Beaver Galleries Award Exhibition. Beaver Galleries, ACT. August 1985.*

The Beaver Galleries Award Exhibition is an annual $500 acquisitive award, the theme of each exhibition being a medium with artists invited by the gallery to exhibit.

This year's exhibition deals with paper and there are eleven exhibitors: Gaynor Cardew (ACT); Sherry Cook (Sydney); Ruth Faerber (Sydney); Beth Hatton (Sydney); Inga Hunter (Sydney); Raymond Lefroy (WA); Sandra Morris (WA); Katherine Nix (ACT); Anne Marie Power (Melbourne); Judy Silver (ACT); and Penny Wells (Tasmania).

The winner of the award was Raymond Lefroy with *Earth Curve – Orbital Presence*, made of recycled cast rag fibre over soft ground etching. The result is a very sophisticated structure of several overlapping levels, where within a tight formal and almost geometric shell are preserved pockets of faint trace-like organic forms.

The show as a whole is important as a statement concerning some contemporary Australian attitudes to paper as a craft medium. While paper as sculpture has an ancient heritage, it is used too rarely in Australia.

Outstanding is a series of bird images (Morris) cast and formed in paper and painted to suggest reality. Birds like 'Parrot and Wall' and 'Orchid Bird' are shown as if dead. The very quality of the fragility of the environment itself creating disturbing and spiritually haunting works.

Pauline Green is a Fine Arts student at ANU.

JAYN THOMAS. *Meat Market Craft Centre, Melbourne, 14–28 August.*

The Melbourne Meat Market Craft Centre held an exhibition by Jayn Thomas, who displayed her textile designs in a sensitive manner lending a very natural quality to something that conveys great strength and overwhelming power.

These textiles which hang in a group of three at an almost unattainable height, stand completely on their own, relying on very little as a support.

These very powerful works are excellent not only to touch and speculate upon, but they portray a sense of great mystical aura as these enormous heavy banners silently sway with one another.

Jayn's smaller works lack this mystery and strength as art pieces. Unfortunately once something is presented in a very traditional manner, that is, mounted within a frame, negative criticism is at hand.

If Jayn's complete attention and energy were to be poured solely into creating more of these pillars of strength then her textiles would stand in all their glory, for no other reason but their own.

Helena Torikov is a Fine Arts student at RMIT.

RITA HALL. *Cuppacumbalong, Tharwa, ACT. 11 August – 8 September, 1985.*

Rita Hall's spider orchids are wicked, vicious metamorphosed forms from nature juxtaposed against harsh backgrounds. Not designed to delight everyone. However, this printmaker is versatile showing a softer outlook in a distant view of landscape. A triptych *Rock and Grass Landscape* is more subtle, though rocks bear a closer relationship to amoebic forms than geological masses. In *Rock and Bush Landscape* the rocks, reverting to physical reality, still resemble embryonic images. These were most successful I found, combining thoughtful elements of design: mirror images of landscape delineated with a delicate line.

Apart from basic technique, the enigmatic qualities of the hangings have not been successfully transposed to the garments in the exhibition; no definite statement one way or other: neither inspiring creations nor trim jackets. Perhaps the constraints of fitting a balanced design around front, back and sleeves has stifled creative impulses. A better solution could be to throw ideas of symmetry to the wind and liberate design from following body form. Why were unique bold designs created on a series of identical tailored jackets? I find the contradiction extraordinary since total success depends upon their mutual compatibility.

Sue Flutter is currently researching an Honours Thesis at the Department of Fine Arts, ANU, Canberra.

SHAUNAGH WILLMAN. *Inner City Clayworkers' Gallery, Sydney. August 1985.*

Shaunagh Willman's work draws on the traditional folk pottery of the Mediterranean but she also admits to being influenced by Picasso's forays into ceramics and his visual play between painting and sculpture. Her basic forms are robust earthenware pieces in classic shapes, sturdy, thick-lipped jugs, plates and pots meant for the rough and tumble of peasant life.

She exhibits a deft touch with the slip and has put to good use the exigencies of working quickly and working 'wet', getting her designs on quickly before firing. Her decoration achieves a certain lyricism with simple dots and stripes in yellow, blue and white. She works her decoration all over the pot, inside and out, top and bottom, without it being too fussy or too much. The design never overextends itself or intrudes on to the pots. What are really stocky, sturdy little pieces have been injected with playfulness and movement, yet I still found them too timid.

Pam Thorne

VICTORIA HOWLETT. *The Potters' Gallery, Sydney. 6-23 August 1985.*

Victoria Howlett's latest exhibition represents a thematic evolution of her previous work. Those who have followed this Victorian potter have noted her very individual approach to decoration. She is concerned with the pot as a canvas, a surface on which to deploy her designs. Her themes for this exhibition are the patterns of a forest in springtime which she evokes with a lyrical employment of daubs of delphinium blue, soft violets and pinks. In this her pieces stand midway between realistic depiction and the study of pattern for its own sake. The balance is just right.

For the most part she works on large surfaces, sturdy earthenware platters subjected to higher than usual firing in order to evince the bright colours. The vessels bear the marks of the production process with an integrity not ashamed to reveal the moulds from which they came.

Though perhaps technically justifiable, the thick clay seems inappropriate here; to my mind an uncomfortable base for such delicate patterns.

Pam Thorne is a Sydney crafts enthusiast.

VICTORIA HOWLETT. *Potter's Gallery, Darlinghurst, NSW. 6-28 August.*

The influence of nature is paramount in the claywork of Victoria Howlett. Flowers and gardens provide the motifs decorating these objects. Often the pale delicate flowers belie the bold, thick utensils underneath creating a tension within each object.

At their best these works evoke subtle features of the landscape and its beauty. In 9. *Pond Edge* the central panel of the plate shows a pale reflection of the blue flowers around the edge over which two streams have seeped. In 28. *Small Dish II* the symbol of the waterlily and leaf is superbly succinct. However no. 23. *Orange and Blue Stand* with deep blue waterlilies on terracotta seems garish and artificial.

All these works have a lively and spontaneous quality and do not seem laboured. The decoration is often in the form of repeating patterns but with the appearance of a watercolour. Irregularity of shape and uneven surfaces give each item the appeal of the quirky and idiosyncratic. In fact they could almost be products of nature.

Johanna Fischbein is a Sydney art historian.

DEIDRE DOWMAN. *Australian Craftworks, Sydney. 24 August – 7 September, 1985.*

Soft flowing forms and fantasy are two key elements of Deidre Dowman's work. Irregularity, asymmetry and fanciful themes characterise these sculptures, jewellery and screens fashioned out of scraps and shreds of cloth.

These are essentially whimsical objects in which brightly coloured plain and figured fabrics have been combined to create a feeling of joy and festivity. They seem inspired by fairy tales and a vivid imagination. Faces of quilted stockings are remarkably real providing a reminder of dreams and childhood tales. A mirror surrounded by undulating folds of fabric, twisting shapes and two court jesters is entitled *Games People Play*. One sculpture is made from fraying shreds of blue and pink fabric artfully arranged and suspended from a fishing net.

These works show a skilful and witty use of simple materials for an aesthetic and romantic effect. Through these items the viewer is transported into a fantasy world.

Johanna Fischbein is a Sydney art historian.

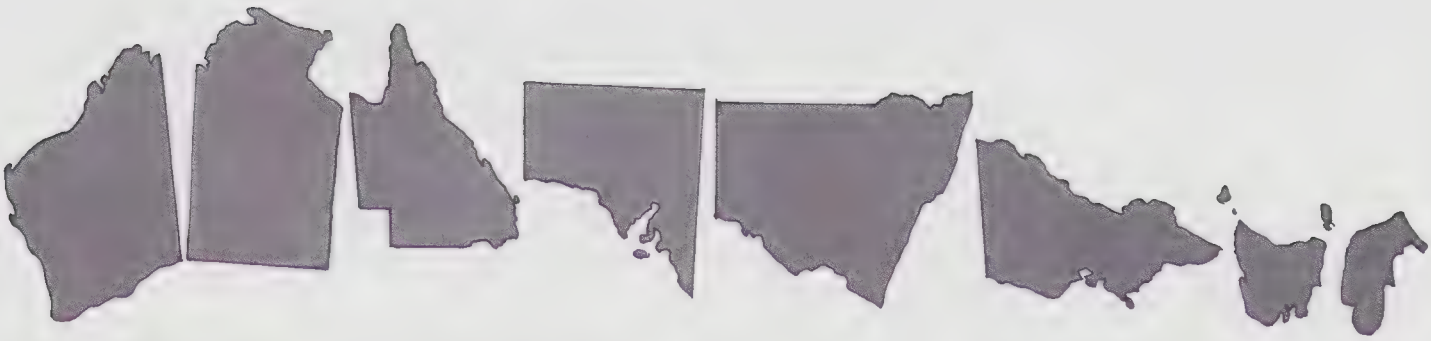
DAVID PHILLIPS AND SANDRA KUNAS. *Gallery Erewhon, Sydney. 15–31 October 1985.*

These two jewellers specialise in contemporary ornaments one can only describe as extreme. Phillips uses rusted nails, glass shards and ill-digested chewing gum to form apocalyptical brooches. In David's obvious desire to shock, he alienated me. Not through revulsion but because of a sense I had seen it all before.

Sandra Kunas' thigh-pieces were another matter. Sandra used beryllium and lead to form torques that clamp about one's upper leg. The metals were wonderfully treated and coloured with exotic extraterrestrial hues. The use of a leaden thigh-piece might seem awkward and illogical but if one has to choose one, it might as well be Sandra's.

Both of these artists have chosen to take an anti-jewellery pose in their work. David's approach is too strident. This is not the first rebellious image this season, nor is it the last. This artist should seek more original images to make his point. As for Sandra's torques, it is not clear what she intends: Disrupt preconceptions of jewellery? Suggest images of female bondage? I found her work much more interesting for what it didn't say An alternative title for this exhibition might be Crys and Whispers

Jaqi Hummer-Zinger is a Sydney critic and commentator.



Crafts Council Calendar

Tasmania

77 Salamanca Place, Hobart, 7000
Tel: 23 5622

12 December – 11 January. Christmas show.

20 January – 10 February. Fibre exhibition, *Women of the Cloth.*

17 February – 4 March. Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery Exhibition. Jenny Toynbee-Wilson paper jewellery.

18 March – mid-April. Ceramics exhibition, Margot Manchester and Gina Jetson.

Western Australia

1st Floor, Perth City Railway Station,
Wellington Street, Perth, 6000
Tel: 327 2799

1 – 12 December. Perth Technical College Graduation Exhibition.

12 – 24 December. Crafts for Christmas.

5 – 19 January. Groups and Guilds. Promotion of member groups and guilds; aims and objectives.

24 January – 16 February. Rings Exhibition, attached to an International JMGA Conference focusing on rings.

20 February – 27 March. *Warm and Wonderful.* Mixed media exhibition setting the trend for the new season.

Australian Capital Territory

1 Aspinal Street, Watson, 2602
Tel: 41 2373

9 – 27 January. Utopia Batik.

February. Entrepreneurial Exhibition or Travelling Exhibition.

9 – 17 March. Canberra Potter's Society Annual Exhibition.

April. Joint exhibition with Canberra Art Workshop.

April. Special Maori Exhibition.

New South Wales

100 George Street, The Rocks, Sydney, 2000
Tel: 279 126

16 November – 24 December. 1985 Christmas Show Exhibition.

25 December – 6 January. Closed.

January/February. Living Traditions. Aspects for Transport.

February. Paper show.

March. Theatre craft.

Year of the Youth travelling exhibition. Touring NSW from September 1985 for twelve months. Contact Jan Irvine, CCNSW.

Queensland

School of Art Building, 166 Ann Street, Brisbane, 4000
Tel: 229 2661

January. Closed.

March. Gift exhibition geared for Governmental Departments. In conjunction with the Queensland Potters Association.

South Australia

169 Payneham Road, St Peters, 5069
Tel: 42 4001

Late December – early January. Closed.

Travelling Suitcase Exhibitions, which include: Stitch in Pine, Bend Belly and Shoulder, To Whom It May Concern; plus two new exhibitions: Drawing and Going Overseas.

8 – 9 March. Festival Crafts '86.

Northern Territory

Bullocky Point, Fannie Bay, 5790
Tel: 81 6615, 81 6616

20 November – 15 December. Members exhibition.

8 December. Christmas Fair.

16 December – 27 January. Closed.

13 February – 2 March. Exhibition of ceramics and china painting by Betty Hocking.

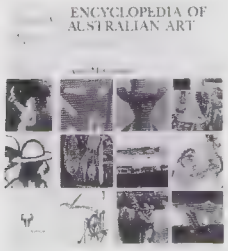
Victoria

7 Blackwood Street, North Melbourne, 3051
Tel: 329 8856, 329 8719

Late December – Mid January. Closed

Books

Susan Thompson
Reviews Coordinator



Encyclopedia of Australian Art. Alan McCulloch. Hutchinson Publishing Group. 1984. Vol One: A – K, 80 illus, 64 plates; Vol Two: L – Z, 94 illus, 64 plates. 1327 pp in two volumes. $85.00.

Artist, writer, critic, arts administrator Alan McCulloch is well qualified to produce such a publication. Currently director of Monington Peninsula Arts Centre he already has several distinguished art books to his credit including **The Golden Age of Australian Painting: Impressionism and the Heidelberg School and Artists of the Australian Gold Rush.**

His compilation of the **Encyclopedia of Australian Art** began as a looseleaf filing system soon after he started writing art criticism in 1944. The original edition was published in 1968; this current presentation, now grown to two volumes, is the second revision.

The work aims to be a complete, compact reference guide to the history of the visual arts in Australia from the beginning to present day. While history was permitted to speak for itself concerning events, institutions and artists of the past, the author admits the difficulties of choosing whom to include among contemporary artists. He has selected those whose works were represented in a public collection up to 1980, the year in which the first draft of the manuscript was completed.

The Encyclopedia contains entries for art associations, major exhibitions and festivals as well as biographies of individual artists, arts administrators, authors and critics. Mr McCulloch quotes his sources for most entries, whether these are other publications or direct interviews with the artists themselves.

There are also very useful listings under the headings Films on Australian Art (up to 1965), Galleries (public art galleries/museums and major commercial galleries), Magazines, Reviews, Periodicals and Newspapers (listed in order by date on which publication commenced), Prizes and Scholarships, Schools, Trusts and Foundations and Universities.

My only criticism of this work is its rather sketchy coverage of the crafts in Australia, historical and contemporary. There are brief overviews under the headings Ceramics and Ceramic Artists, Jewellery Design and Designers, Weaving and Tapestry, and Wood Carving. After a short history of the use of each medium in Australia some mention is made of current activity and practitioners gleaned from a few craft books and catalogues. There are also biographical entries for a few individual craftspeople but with some major omissions. Given the vast scope of the **Encyclopedia** it may have been difficult to research the crafts thoroughly; however mention could have been made of the national and State Crafts Councils network as well as specialist bodies such as the Potters Society *etc* in order to point readers in the direction of further information on the crafts.

The author intended this work for artists, scholars, collectors and connoisseurs; with the one reservation mentioned above I would highly recommend it for purchase by schools, libraries, visual arts bodies and arts administrators. Its historical coverage of the arts and its practical lists particularly those of prizes and scholarships, schools and universities make it an important contribution to the field.

Beth Hatton. Beth is a weaver and papermaker, currently employed as part-time librarian at the Crafts Council of Australia.

South Australian Ceramics 1900-1950 Judith Thompson. Art Gallery of South Australia, 1983. $7.95.

For everyone interested in the history and collecting of Australian ceramics, **South Australian Ceramics 1900-1950** published by the Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide in 1983 is essential

reading. Written by Judith Thompson the foundation Curator of Australian Decorative Arts at the Art Gallery of South Australia, this book represents the serious commitment that the institution has to the collecting, display and documentation of the art of South Australia. As the first scholarly publication on South Australian ceramics this book is notable, not just for being the first, but also for all the information it contains. If as Wilfred Prest the then Chairman of the Art Gallery Board writes in his forward, that this book is 'the first of many such publications', I hope it will soon be followed by similar books devoted to South Australian silversmiths and cabinetmakers.

Following a most interesting introduction to the history of ceramics and their production in South Australia, the book continues with accounts of individual potters and potteries. Included are two well-known studio potters of South Australian origin, Margaret Preston and Gladys Reynell, as well as those not so well known outside their home state, Norah Godlee, Mary Egerton and Doreen Goodchild. Whereas the work of these studio potters is not so common on the collector's market, some of the commercial potteries covered by the book is much more familiar. The accounts of the history of Bennett's Magill Pottery, William Holford's London Pottery Works, Koster's Premier Pottery and the Bosley Pottery are especially interesting. The individual biographies and histories are invaluable. It is most commendable that a list of sources and bibliography have been included.

As well as being an excellent account of ceramics in South Australia the book acts as a catalogue of the South Australian ceramics in the Art Gallery of South Australia. The seven pages at the back of the book, devoted to a list of the Gallery's holdings at the time of publication are a most valuable record. For an institution that acquired its first ceramics of South Australian origin in 1968 this list represents a considerable and worthwhile achievement.

Obviously cost has determined that there could not be more illustrations. (Would it not be wonderful to have a reproduction of each item that the catalogue lists?) However I do regret the choice of a curious pinkish sepia for the reproductions. Why not just black and white? Still the cover showing Doreen Goodchild's delightful Young dancer with cymbals, of 1933 makes up for a lot.

John McPhee. John is the Curator of Decorative Arts at the Australian National Gallery, Canberra.

Tan Your Hide. Phyllis Hobson. Garden Way Publishing. 133 pages. Drawings only, 4 plates. $12.95.

This book is very informative and the author appears to have a very good grasp of tanning. My only complaint is that the instructions seem somewhat brief and more detail could be used, however the author does set out clearly the different methods of tanning.

In fact, if you worked your way methodically through the different methods of tanning, perhaps, with experimentation of different tanning solutions, you could improve your technique.

The illustrations are brief and the book could definitely use some step-by-step guides. You would need to do a lot of reading to get some of the information you require.

The book appears geared much towards American use as all measures are imperial and not metric. There is however, an Australian produced book available called **Knives, Skinning and Tanning** written by John Leireiter which is in metric.

Tan Your Hide, in my opinion, would find a market perhaps in the farmer who wants to tan his own hide or perhaps the hobbyist or shooter. As a theory book in schools it would be very valuable with all the information on the different types of tanning for the information of school students.

John McLellan. John was a saddler by trade and for the last 15 years has been managing director of a firm of leather merchants in Brisbane.

Fibre Forum. Tri-annual publication of The Australian Forum for Textile Arts, P.O. Box 77, University of Queensland, St. Lucia. Editor: Janet De Boer; published since 1981. 56-60pp per issue; colour, black and white photographs. Regular columns, features, exhibitions, book reviews; contemporary Australian work in all textile media. $16 per year.

It's a real challenge to review **Fibre Forum** because of my proximity to it in every way. Also, the magazine has to be judged in terms of the economic realities that rule it, so that it isn't really 'like' most of the publications it tends to compete with. People expect it to be; they say things like 'Why don't you have patterns for making things LIKE **Handwoven**?' . . . 'Why don't you have lots of colour LIKE ***Craft Australia***? . . . 'Why don't you show work from exhibitions all over the country LIKE **Fiberarts**?'

The precedents set by other magazines have indeed been useful, but a national textiles magazine in this country has its own natural evolution, rather like the marsupials. For an editor, such a magazine is an indulgence, a joy, a tender growing thing, and a merciless headache. When I first took on editing my knowledge was so limited you might as well have asked me to spin straw into gold and it showed. The magazine and I grew up together in a big hurry. Added to which I had a whole country of disparate types to unite under one eclectic umbrella.

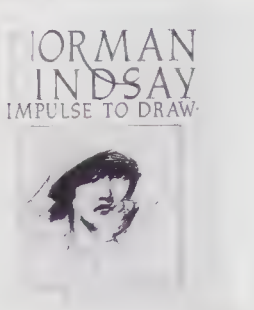
Fortunately, Betty and Tony Franks and I make a good working team, as we're all a bit mad in the same ways, which helps. Betty is President of AFTA; Tony is Treasurer. And there is also a helpful committee, kept small in number; an Editorial Review Panel; and regular columnists.

So what have we achieved with content and with quality in four years? A great deal. Recent feature sections have been in topics such as *The Commissioned Textile, Functional Fashions, Surfaces, Men in Textiles* and the 1974 *Fibre Interchange Conference* in Canberra. Each year a 'Common Thread' is examined from many points of view, over several issues. So far we've done bast fibres, silk, mohair and cotton, it's wool for 1986. Some articles have life beyond the once-off magazine; for example *Dyeing for Fibres and Fabrics* is a special booklet which recycles some of our best dye articles over the years. And a series of articles will appear in 1986 on *Tertiary Level Textile Education*, both as part of the magazine and in booklet form. The list goes on and on; my study is a significant resource centre now and I try to share the wealth.

Of course we cannot pay for any of the work that goes into the magazine except a vastly reduced fee for typesetting. There is no such thing as a 'realistic' costing for a magazine like **Fibre Forum**. Our only hope in future may very well be private corporate assistance, if we can attract any, as the potential number of subscribers and advertisers is so limited.

For the moment it's a 'love' job well and truly; happily I can say it's one of the most interesting things I may ever do and I've discovered that by hook and by crook I can support my habit, which is vastly time consuming. I do feel like bolting sometimes, and I still wince at errors and fret over the amount of convincing people seem to need. Lest this turn into an editorial rather than a review however, let me just say **Fibre Forum** is great, and I yearn for the day when some other editor has to hear, 'Why don't you have lots of great articles LIKE **Fibre Forum**?'

Janet De Boer. Janet is the editor of *Fibre Forum.*



Norman Lindsay: Impulse to Draw. Lin Bloomfield. Bay Books, 1984. 223 pages, 290 figures listed alphabetically in appendix with biographical outline. $39.95.

Lin Bloomfield, gallery director, publisher and author/editor of several books including **The World of Norman Lindsay** (1979) is also appointed Commonwealth Valuer for Norman Lindsay's work. Through her long association with the Lindsay family she has once again given us access to Lindsayiana previously unavailable in published form.

Bloomfield has defined her aims in this book as providing a survey of Lindsay's artistic development over some eighty years of his working life through his pencil drawings, the only medium in which it is possible to do so with any real consistency. The result is a fresh look at this much-discussed artist. Norman Lindsay was the original Australian multi-media personality.

Some of the most delightful surprises are the early drawings, although I fear that some of the dates ascribed to these works are apocryphal (particularly the series dated c.1893 which look to me later reminiscences of his Creswick schooldays made after his move to Sydney). Many of the drawings are from the model and the division of the material into two parts, chronological and thematic, allows one to make relevant comparisons between his early and late works as well as the differences in approach dictated by the various media he used.

The text is not extensive and one must really say that it is before all else, a 'picture book', as so many of its predecessors have also been. This is not to denigrate its value which lies precisely in the reproduction of over 200 hitherto unpublished and largely privately owned drawings.

Bloomfield's annotations of the drawings are rich with anecdotes of Lindsay family life and habits, an informative 'who's who' of the famous Australians he befriended or associated with, and a number of handy clues for identifying the individual models who inspired some of his best-known images.

Because of this rather 'cosy' approach, the book will no doubt appeal to a wide audience. However it also holds interest for the more specialist audience of collectors keen to find out more about specific drawings of a particular period or the related paintings and etchings that followed.

Ursula Prunster. Ursula is Education Officer, Adult and Tertiary Services, with the Art Gallery of NSW.

Fine Bookbinding in the Twentieth Century. Roy Harley Lewis. David and Charles, 1984. 152 pages, 33 colour, 82 mono plates. $39.95.

Roy Harley Lewis' credentials as an authority on this subject cannot be faulted. As one of the better known 'postal' suppliers of rare books over the years he has the unique advantage of being among the first to know when anything of interest is emerging from the book world. In addition he is author of an impressive run of books about books as well as general writings for TV, films and the theatre.

As a companion to his previous publications on bibliophilic matters this tasty volume breaks new ground. The subject has not to my knowledge been dealt with before as a complete investigation. Tantalising snippets on rare occasions have been included in more general works but as the subject matter itself is of limited (numerically) appeal and the production factors both ephemeral and in the main of private interest, no other work has taken the initiative to present such a varied activity in such a concise and objective manner.

From the centuries of constraint in the visual interpretation of authorship, this past decade has produced a new breed of binder no longer content to be the slave of suspect industrial practices.

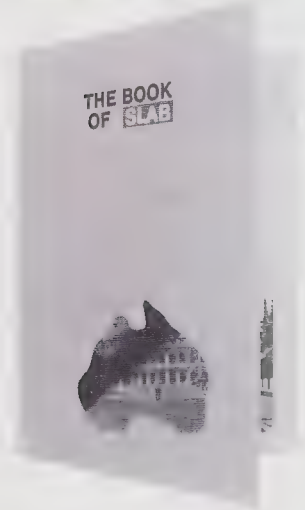
The magnificent plates cover the current, often controversial, movements in this renaissance period of the book arts as well as documenting the background from the earlier part of this century. Ever practical, the author has provided a chapter on 'The Names to Note', an invaluable reference source for all interested parties.

Whilst acknowledging my own bias for the subject there have been few essays that have even come close to such a complete view and none with the wit and genuine enthusiasm of this author.

As a seminal work this book will serve as a yardstick not only for its breadth but for its inspirational presentation of this rapidly growing interest.

Mike Hudson. Mike is involved in the book arts.

The Book of Slab is described by its author as a contemporary epic. 'Its form is encyclopaedic, tactile, it survives as a printing manual. It is more like remystification. At each grab that **Slab** attempts, the process rendered is proliferation, documentation. entanglement, restarts and more selection.'



The Book of Slab. 1983 Ted Hopkins in association with the publisher, Champion Books, and with technical assistance from Backyard Press. Price is means-tested: range $40-$500. To order **Slab**, contact Champion Books, Prahran, Vic or Lamella Books, Sydney.

Artists' books which draw attention to the symbiotic relationship between content and craft have a long tradition in Australia, and Champion Publishers, the creators of **Teledex** and **Yallourn Stories**, as well as several books of poetry and a parody of the art journal **Art and Text**, are not new to this art form.

Champion's latest publication, **The Book of Slab** (which incorporates elements from earlier developments and includes **The Yallourn Stories**) signals the fascination the publisher and its alter-ego, Backyard Press continue to have for this medium.

The Book of Slab consists of a well-produced volume with several tipped, stapled or sewn-in inserts, among which is a 33⅓rpm record entitled *50 Guitars go Slab Italiano* and a found page that has been aged. The publishers have also produced a separate promotional brochure which gives a description of the book, together with instructions for ordering. These instructions include a means-test based scale of prices at which the prospective purchaser might buy, borrow, or lease-buy **The Book of Slab.**

Taken as a whole, the book might best be described as an anthology of philosophical forays into the countryside, as chronicled by Slab, a persona providing a sort of benumbed witness to a wide range of human eccentricities, many of which are encountered in the form of bizarre or ridiculous 'monuments'.

The Book of Slab appears to develop around a consistent line of autobiographical narrative, and it is sometimes difficult to separate Slab from the person of Ted Hopkins, who acts as a witness to the events and situations catalogued. Hopkins' presence is indicated, for example, by the inclusion of a transparent page, printed with edited excerpts from a newspaper article relating to his background in Australian Rules Football; a set of letterheads that

relate to his term as a printer; and constant other conceits.

Throughout the book, Hopkins demonstrates a fascination with irony. Sometimes this irony takes the form of a punch-line. For example, the last line in an article on the soap opera 'Arcade', in which publicity director, Tom Greer, states: 'In 'Number 96' in the early days, we set out to shock people . . . Now we're not going on those lines because you can't shock audiences any more.' Another example is the statement by Mr Evan Richards, a retired engineer, who claimed, in a report on early Brisbane drains, that 'drainage is the most important function of local government.'

Irony is also implicit in visual references, such as the sign near the town of Myrtleford identifying a creek below the bridge as 'Barwidgee Creek formerly Myrtle Creek', a proclamation which led to an investigation with the Shire Secretary as to the reasons for the change of name. Slab also documents an advertisement for the Melody Baltic Restaurant in Albury, which announces, among other activities, 'your own question night'!

The inclusion of **The Yallourn Stories** gives proof that the *leitmotifs* of the banal and the ironic have extended throughout the work of Ted Hopkins and Champion. This time a 'model' industrial town in the Latrobe Valley is the stage for the playing-out of a rather pathetic drama. The town was to be destroyed in order to open-cut mine a limited supply of brown coal that lies beneath the site. The greatest irony is the fact that the town was set up by the industry to house the workers for the area. An account is given of a visit by Princess Margaret to a lookout spot over the Latrobe Valley to be shown the industrial splendour of the State Electricity Commission. The royal visit did not include a view of the town of Yallourn. A last minute change of route, and the fact that the Princess did not ascend the tower renders useless the attempt by members of the Save Yallourn Movement to act out a funeral of the Princess of Yallourn to bring Princess Margaret's attention to the destruction of the town.

The actual cover for the section incorporating **The Yallourn Stories** features an aerial photograph of a sports oval in Yallourn on which a number of

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IMPEDIMENT

circles, made by Barry Wold and Ian Close from 450mm wide strips of cloth sewn together, are placed to show the actual size and space covered by the smoke stacks of the Hazelwood Power Station. The circles 'accounted for the achitectural integrity the SEC (State Electricity Commission) had painstakingly brought to the Valley, especially Yallourn and some of its power generating installations. They also provoked alarm. They gave a perspective of the level of consumption and its effect'.

Like the world's tallest tree that was cut down, and the river with a former name, the town of Yallourn became a 'was', a concept in the past tense.

The Book of Slab is not only an inventory of human foibles; it is also a comment on the craft of printing. Much use is made of visual and literal quotations of everything from tabloid format newspapers and yellow journalism to the setting up and solving of printing problems as a skill in itself. This fascination with printing may also be seen as autobiographical, since Ted Hopkins has been involved in printing since he first learned the craft at the Melbourne firm of Norman J. Field.

In sum, the book is a mini-encyclopaedia. Witness its mock-reference to those Time-Life publications that purport to encapsulate the entire civilisation of ancient Rome in one volume! The question is, however, whether this production which is an assemblage, an autobiography and a cornucopia of printing skills works as a whole. Certainly there is an element of self-indulgence in the look and the feel of the book, and the reader will encounter certain 'fascinations', such as the printed letterheads and the two page spread of the fish-in at the Richmond City Baths that tend to distract from the overall concept. But this is more apparent in the first viewing. I use the word 'viewing' rather than 'reading' because I felt compelled to look through the book before actually going back to read it. Only by reading **The Book of Slab** from beginning to end, and becoming somewhat familiar with it, am I convinced that this rather picaresque quest for the out-of-place, the grotesque and the ridiculous in human nature proceeds from and returns to a very solid line of narrative progression. There is a sense of entanglement in the object, of repeated starts and of travel, but

there is also a sense of re-embracing the autobiographical line and the tactile object itself. Gradually all the fragments coalesce to emerge as a whole, and the result is ultimately quite successful.

Alan Dodge. Alan is the co-ordinator of publications at the Australian National Gallery.

The Ladies Picture Show. Caroline Ambrus. Hale and Iremonger. 1984. 288 pages. $35.00.

The neglect and lack of serious critical appraisal of Australian women artists and their work is only gradually being redressed through the efforts of (usually) women scholars and authors.

Carol Ambrus' bibliography **The Ladies Picture Show** is a recent publication which swells the numbers of books published since the upsurge in feminism in the 60s and 70s. Although it doesn't realize the greatest potential of its genre it is obviously the result of long arduous hours of research. It is a firm basis for further development which could result in a detailed and exhaustive reference which is very much overdue in Australia.

Caroline Ambrus after working as a librarian, studied art in Canberra and Sydney. She then worked as a screen printer before obtaining a Bachelor of Education specializing in art and librarianship. In 1975 she received a grant from the International Women's Year Committee to research the bibliography and history of Australian Women Artists and **The Ladies Picture Show** is the result.

The book is a bibliography of written resources which students of art history and those interested in cultural development in Australia will find both useful and interesting.

Some 400 or so names (in alphabetical order) are included of women born before 1915 and who had established their careers before 1940. The introduction is a detailed account of the research methods followed, the reasons for and aims of the book and the circumstances and constraints which shaped the criteria.

Although there are only short bibliographical notes followed by details of awards and exhibitions, collections and galleries where artists' work is represented and sources such as newspapers, periodicals, indexes and catalogues etc., all this impersonal information nonetheless 'places' the artist in our minds. It opens up the blank history has so often presented on the activities of women and gives us a sense of a continuum of women working in the arts to this day.

When I was asked to review this book it was on the basis of the very few craftswomen included as against those who painted. Caroline Ambrus in the introduction says:

'Women who were involved in the crafts generally exhibited with the arts and crafts societies, which staged large group exhibitions. It is regrettable that my criteria for the selection of artists excludes the large and anonymous body of women involved in the crafts. To some extent this compromises the purposes of the bibliography namely, to provide access to information on women artists regardless of medium time and financial constraints, however, prevented an in-depth study of the activities of artists in the various societies, including the Craft Councils. This indicates further areas of research which could be undertaken in the future.'

(Anyone out there interested?!)

There are approximately 25 names of craftswomen included and for some, their craft was an adjunct to their primary interest, painting. Given that a large number of women have always pursued craft activities, this hardly gives an accurate picture. It does however point up the biases which exist (and still to some extent do) towards particular forms of art and against the serious appraisal at the public level of all of women's occupations.

There is no record either of domestic craft work. Another shortcoming is that it concentrates on the Eastern States thus omitting several women of importance from other States.

A notable exclusion is Mary Card the world renowned originator of many of the designs used for crochet and embroidery.

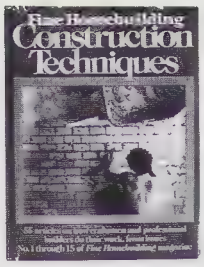
In her introductory essay 'Australian women artists between the wars: the unacknowledged generation' Ambrus takes to task the paternalistic attitudes of historians towards women artists and shows how opinions and attitudes of revered historians can be taken up and used as fact thus colouring most accounts dealing with the subject. She presents an argument which counters many accepted views about women artists, in particular the reasons for women's dominance of the painting during the 20s and 30s. She blames the 'absence of a long academic tradition in the fine arts, coupled with disorganised, unaccessible resources, 'which have produced myths, guesses, untested hypotheses and fallacious arguments masquerading as art history'.

This spirited and challenging essay is a lively inclusion giving as it does a latter day attitude to women artists and historical research in a book dealing with women many of whom developed and underwent their art training during an earlier era of feminism when it was still thought that having the vote would solve women's problems.

Finally a word about the book's format. I found it a dingy little book which looks very much like a 'reference' book, something one only uses when writing an essay for next Monday. This is a shame as the book deserves to be more visually attractive and thus draw a wider range of readers. It has twelve black and white plates which break the text here and there. Some are however presented on their side and most are poorly and unimaginatively placed. The size of the book is restrictive in this regard and cost would, I imagine, have made colour prints impossible. It looks to me as if it's been designed by a 'reader' rather than by someone with a strong visual sense and understanding of relationships between text and image.

It is a book of value, however, not only to libraries and resource centres but to anyone wishing to be reminded of and recognise the contribution of those who have gone before.

Vivienne Binns. Vivienne is an artist, craftsperson and Artist in Community Specialist Craft Area; Enamelling.



Fine Homebuilding Construction Techniques. The Taunton Press. 55 articles from issues 1 to 15 of Fine Homebuilding Magazine. $US24.95.

It has always been a problem when considering books on home building, that the majority are from the US or the UK. Many of the methods and regulations are not relevant to Australia, and the majority of builders and building authorities would require considerable convincing to allow a home to be built by overseas methods.

Here, however, is a collection of articles, which skilfully manages to by-pass the problems, apparently unintentionally, by focusing on the skill possible in building a humble home.

The 55 articles are divided into five broad sections, masonry, tools and materials, log construction and timber framing, finish and woodwork, and start with a section on general construction. Within each of these sections barring the first, each of the articles is on a particular skill, or detail. The authors of the information, are usually specialists in a particular field. This is what makes the book so attractive even to Australian readers.

It could be argued that many of the features would never be wanted in a home, but to incorporate just a few of the ideas, or to use the techniques and adapt them to other projects, is a very real possibility.

The Australian Forum for Textile Arts
publishers of
FIBRE FORUM
MAGAZINE
invite subscription enquiries. This Australian multi-textile magazine is tri-annual, with colour and costs $16/year in 1986. Write to:
THE AUSTRALIAN FORUM for TEXTILE ARTS, P. O. Box 77, University of Queensland, St. Lucia, 4067

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Many successful builders, both professional and amateur, have achieved excellence in their inventiveness even when it came to tools and jigs, and how to achieve good results with traditionally difficult materials. There is a section on tools and materials including a home-made on-site saw and jointer together with the most efficient use of a circular saw and the power planer. Plastering techniques, the use of nail guns, concreting and small-job concreting are covered in detail by specialists. A renovator discusses the tools of his trade and how to buy these tools.

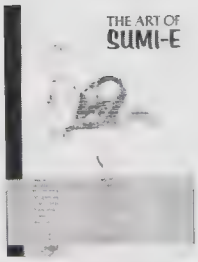
With the incredible interest in pole framing in Australia and the virtual absence of literature from local sources, this style of building still relies heavily on overseas experience. The techniques shown here, while different to common pole framing methods, are still useful for the basics of working with large section timber, and the handling and moving of large timbers will certainly interest many.

The Taunton Press is well known for their **Fine Woodworking** publications, and the final section on finishing and trim, gives ideas on how excellence can be applied to other areas. The details are superb, and the authors tell the reader not only the easy parts, but the problems involved as well.

A useful two or three pages at the end of each section, gives short tips or trade secrets, those simple ideas that make you wonder why you never thought of them yourself.

This book is not for those who are not willing to allow a little time to ponder their work, to plan or are simply after short cuts. The articles will encourage efficiency, but will not compromise what can be achieved with care. Then again, it may be of general interest anyway; after all we can all strive for something a little better. This will give us a glimpse.

Dieter Mylius. Dieter is manager of the Information Services, Sydney Building Information Centre.



The Art of Sumi-e.
Appreciation, Techniques and Application. Shozo Sato. Kodansha. 1984. 332 Pages, 75 plates. $45.50.

Shozo Sato has over 30 years experience in introducing the arts and culture of Japan to people throughout the United States, Canada, Europe, Israel and India. Since 1964, Mr. Sato has been artist-in-residence and professor of fine arts at the University of Illinois.

Sumi-e is for the artist and student or any person interested in understanding this ancient art. With over 400 examples and illustration, this book will delight art admirers interested in a form and method of black and white ink painting which has behind it a 'way of life'.

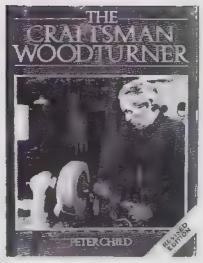
Mr. Sato has succeeded in integrating the theory and practice of *Sumi-e* with the philosophical and aesthetic principles behind this art. The practical aspects of technique require a spiritual and mental discipline intrinsic in this art.

The writer takes us on a journey through time to the development of *Sumi-e* and its history with plates depicting the composition in masterpieces of Chinese and Japanese *Sumi-e* with detailed description and comments on each painting. He lets us see and feel the concepts of this period. Spiritual discipline is a necessity for this art and the use of line, space and monochromes of black. We experience in these works, the essence, a radiating life force that has been imparted to ink and paper. The stroke that 'cuts the paper', this is Sumi-e.

We then progress to fundamental elements, aspect of line, space and calligraphy. Supplies are our next step followed by basic brush techniques with accompanying plates and such clear instructions one can't go wrong. Finally, to the sourcebook of *Sumi-e*, 'The Mustard Seed Garden Manual of Painting', a compendium of experience, wisdom and techniques of master artists from the 9th century on. There is also a selection of reproductions from the sourcebook. Included in each section are Sato's own instructions and illustrations on painting designed with today's artist in mind.

By this stage, you should be all but converted to spending a lifetime experimenting in this wondrous art that asks for the heart, hand and consciousness of the artist to become one. This is to create 'life' in a stroke, to meet that point of ultimate tension that exists when body, mind and spirit are integrated in the act of creation. If, by chance, you are not converted, you will at least be left with a new vision. Your painting, no matter in what media, will take on a new life, for you will have the desire to create life, to 'cut the paper'.

We end with '*Sumi-e* today' a collection of reproductions from modern artists. We can witness the creative force in these works. *Sumi-e* indeed transcends time and place, Sato has created a work of art in the *Art of Sumi-e*.
Dian Synnott. Dian is a freelance writer who also works for *Craft Australia*.



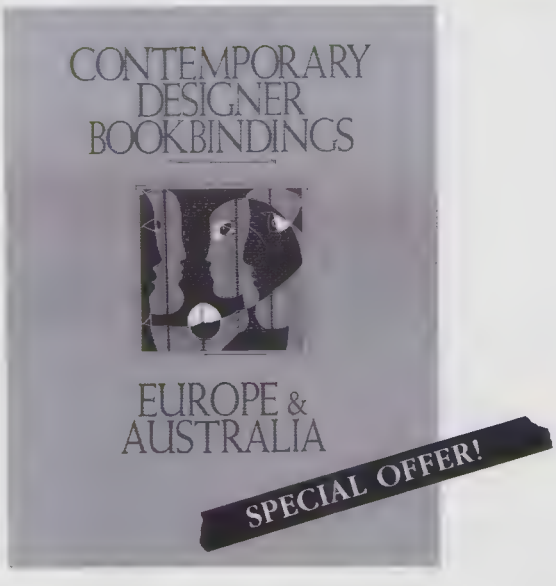
The Craftsman Woodturner.
Peter Child. Bell and Hyman Ltd. 1984. 247 pages with 142 black and white illustrations. $32.95.

This book is a new edition; the original was published in 1971 and reprinted about every two years since. Peter Child is an accomplished English turner who, together with his son Roy, is also known for the design and marketing of high speed steel tools.

The book is intended for the beginner who does not have access to a professional for tuition and seeks to give structure to the self-learning process, a process which Child admits from experience is 'the hard way' to learn rather than from direct teaching.

As such, it competently covers the practical techniques of turning, ranging from basic bowl and spindle work, to the use of chucks, the sharpening and use of tools, finishing, workshop safety and very basic marketing. It deals with these through detailed descriptions accompanied by product examples with black and white photographs.

On a purely technical basis the book is informative, and fairly easy to read. The text is appropriately interspersed with illustrations. However, its main weakness is the quality of design displayed in the product examples shown such as the chequered lamination and hot pokerwork, are in the realms of *kitsch* and I fear reveals the lack of design sensitivity of the author.



Contemporary Designer Bookbinding

This is the first nation-wide survey of Australian designer bookbindings ever assembled. The colour catalogue also includes new European bookbinding brought to Australia especially for exhibition.

This full colour designer award-winning publication is available to *Craft Australia* subscribers for only $5.50 (including postage). Please order by using the coupon at the back of the magazine.

[Shops and galleries interested in wholesale of this catalogue, please contact the magazine.]

Those that call themselves craftspeople, or even artist-craftspeople, or designer-craftspeople, are often really nothing more than skillful technicians. The beginner then, has few quality examples to follow in terms of sound creative philosophy, often just as vital as technical proficiency. Books that purport such a creative approach by their title (**Artistic Woodturning** by Dale L. Nish, for instance) are actually diversions into greater depths of *kitsch*, or mundanity.

An exception to this general rule would be **Woodturning: The Purpose of the Object** by Stephen Hogbin which puts the relatively straight forward skill of turning into a broader perspective of object making. Hogbin uses the turning process as a step towards forms of a more complex nature, where he often breaks down the circular symmetry of the turned piece by dissecting it, then re-assembling it in a different mode, but still relying on the lines of repetitious symmetry.

For the 'straight' turner, that is, one who arrives at a finished statement straight off the lathe, the subtle control of contour in spindle work, or the balanced relationship between inner volumes and outer space in bowl work, is of paramount importance. To achieve them one needs technical skill dictated by an understanding of visual language, together with an appreciation of the qualities of wood. The making skill can often be learned through books, but design skill is rarely conveyed in this manner.

I think this book by Child is actually more appropriate for the artist/designer-maker who wants to incorporate or explore turning as an expression of an already developed aesthetic approach than for the pure novice. However, if accompanied with the Hogbin book for instance, it would form the basis for learning for the astute beginner. That is, if the reader is interested in becoming a creative 'craftsperson' (as the author suggests), rather than merely a turner. In conclusion, I feel that the book is an excellent reference on technique, but perhaps ought to be entitled 'The Technical Woodturner' as a consequence, so as not to contradict its contents.

John Smith. John is a designer, and senior lecturer co-ordinating the Design in Wood course at the Tasmanian School of Art, University of Tasmania.

Popular Enamelling. Erica Speel. Oxford University Press, 1984. 128 pages, 55 black and white photographs, 49 line drawings, 8 colour photographs. $13.99.

Numerous books have been written on enamelling including well respected dissertations on the art and romance of enamelling published during the nineteenth century. Though quaint in style they continue to serve as the mainspring of detailed technical procedure and observation. Erika Speel lists a number of these in her bibliography. The art of enamelling has experienced mixed fortunes during the twentieth century, enjoying a resurgence of activity during the 1950s. This period spawned a number of familiar publications such as **Enamelling on Metal** by Oppi Untracht which became the source book for copper enamellers. The 1970s and 80s have witnessed a remarkable expansion in interest and enthusiasm for enamelling in all its forms and in turn a new generation of books has emerged. Thankfully some of these books are quality colour publications that attempt to redress the paucity of visual resource for an essentially colour oriented medium. **Popular Enamelling** unfortunately is not one of these, rather it falls into the basket of 1950s style publications being neat, inhibited and cost efficient.

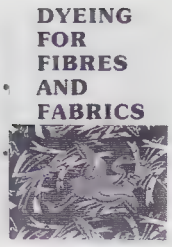
Popular Enamelling is a hard cover, small format book which can most generously be described as a technical handbook. The author makes not the slightest attempt to capture or communicate an enthusiasm for enamelling and with an uninspired four sentence introduction which reads like a poor encyclopaedia definition, it is doubtful the publication will prove popular in the bookshops. As a technical handbook for enamelling it is moderately comprehensive, dealing with both precious and non-precious metals and most of the traditional and contemporary techniques. However, the terse style and the stilted point-form definitions and descriptions soon become monotonous and laborious, while too often being annoyingly generalised.

The treatment of vital metalworking techniques is inadequate, as is the limited index. Despite these faults the book presents a good deal of accurate and detailed information for the patient reader. The facts about enamelling technique tend by nature to be tedious but with a well textured and illustrated book this tendency can be minimised. It seems disappointing that the author with twenty four years experience as a freelance enameller, expert and teacher has not been able to present her subject with more enthusiasm and insight.

There remains one major shortcoming in the book which renders it of debatable value, namely the absence of any discussion of the aesthetics of the medium. Even the most rudimentary acknowledgement of the design elements of colour, line, shape, texture and tone as related to the various techniques would have been most valuable. Rather, an arbitrary division conveniently separates the technique from the creativity and the author has taken the easy option. As a result the projects in section four are droll with no scope offered for individual interpretation let alone any suggestions for expanding the design sensibilities of the reader as technical skills improve.

If, as the title implies, the book is aimed at the potential beginner and hobbyist then it seems destined to miss its mark for it fails to offer the uninitiated any glimpses of the joy of enamelling or the potential of the medium for meaningful creative expression. Erika Speel's approach to enamelling technique is unnecessarily austere and **Popular Enamelling** does not do justice to a truly fascinating craft.

Robyn Tudor. Robyn has lectured in tertiary art institutions in NSW in various arts and crafts, specialising in contemporary jewellery and traditional fine enamelling techniques.



Dyeing for Fibres and Fabrics. Janet De Boer. The Australian Forum for Textile Arts. 1984. $8.00 postpaid. Illustrated with 58 line drawings, 3 photographs.

As the editor explains in her introduction, **Dyeing for Fibres and Fabrics** is 'a survey of both ancient and contemporary dye techniques for fibres and fabrics' and consists of a collection of articles, either reprinted from other sources, or written specially for this booklet. There are several extensive bibliographies and glossaries and lists of suppliers accompany some sections.

Janet De Boer, a well-known craftswoman and teacher of fibre crafts and Secretary of the Australian Forum for Textile Arts, has included a number of articles from the first edition, now out of print, of **Fibre Forum**, as well as reprinting material from other rare or out of print publications.

Articles cover both background information and practical how-to-do-it instructions, gathered together in sections on more or less related subjects.

The first section discusses dye equipment and defines different methods of dyeing. Articles on health hazards of dyeing processes, safety precautions and responsible disposal of waste products follow.

Subjects covered in the rest of the booklet include scouring methods for various fibres, painted warps and fabric painting, transfer printing, photoprinting on fabrics, batik, marbling and use of the microwave oven for dyeing.

Use of the various types of synthetic dyes on different fibres is explained in a number of articles. The section on natural dyes includes much information on the use of Eucalypts and an article describing the organisation of a natural dyeing workshop day.

The last section of the book deals with traditional dyeing and mordanting methods and as well as some historic material, includes articles on Indian dyes and on the use of Indigo in the textiles of Japan, Laos and Nigeria .

Essentially a practical manual, the thin card covered booklet is bound with staples and has two holes punched in the side so that it can be placed in a ring folder and opened flat. It will be a valuable addition to the fibre craftsperson's or student's folder of working notes.

Robyn Mathison. Robyn is a Tasmanian spinner, weaver and dyer who has taught these subjects at Secondary and Adult Education level.

Elvis Lives!

Love me tender
Love me sweet
Never let me go

Garry Benson

Elvis Presley died on August 16, 1977. He would have been fifty on January 8, 1985.

In a quiet corner of Adelaide's Botanic Gardens, Elvis still lives. The hurdy-gurdy of life, kids, mums, gardeners, courting couples and the occasional drunk flows past a beautifully wrought iron cupola. If they stray a little closer, they may see a discreet plaque set in its base:

Erected to the
memory of
ELVIS PRESLEY
by the
Sound of Elvis
Society
26.11.82

It created a furore in the City of Churches. The public was outraged that the sanctity of their favourite gardens was to be violated by the brash presence of a memorial to Rock 'n' Roller Elvis Aaron Presley.

Newspaper columns slammed the Board of the Botanic Gardens, the artist Richard Howard (a Churchill Fellow and master blacksmith) and the Sound of Elvis Remembrance Society. Arthur Bradshaw of Manningham wrote a typical letter:

The Editor

That the board of governors of our green sanctuary of peace and tranquillity, the Botanic Garden, is sanctioning the placement of a plaque [sic] to the memory of Elvis Presley in the main walk seems utterly unbelievable.

Presley was an exponent of the very reverse of peace and tranquillity.

Adelaide Advertiser 6.11.78

It was up to Maureen Bowles of the Sound of Elvis Remembrance Society to reply to the torrent of criticism:

. . . All we ask now is for people to show a little compassion and understanding. We don't want any controversy. There are many other plaques in this Botanic Garden: this will simply be another, but one that means a great deal to us. We are extremely happy that it will be in the garden because we agree that it is very beautiful and peaceful, and our little plaque will not change this in any way.
We would like to make it quite clear that we are not erecting a monument to Elvis Presley, we are financing a planned project of the Botanic Gardens, in his name.

It was all a storm in a cupola.

The lacework pattern cupola, the result of 2500 hours of work by master blacksmith Richard Howard, cost $13,000 and was the result of four years work. Richard Howard had originally approached the Board of the Botanic Gardens with the idea of creating an Ornamental Fountain in memory of his great grandfather, Dr Richard Schomburgk, the second Director of the Garden. As Schomburgk was already represented by a memorial, Richard was asked to manufacture a wrought iron cupola while the board sought funding. At the same time the Elvis Presley group approached the then Director, Noel Lothian, about a possible memorial. The two ideas merged, the money was found, and today Elvis has a beautifully muted memorial in a quiet group of Ficus trees.

The last word should go to Richard Howard:

His music didn't appeal to me. In fact, my taste in music leans towards classical.

Garry Benson is a well-known tapestry weaver and journalist.

Continued from page 105.

advantage of gaining contacts with galleries and shops looking for suppliers as well as contacts with funding bodies and possible sponsors.

Access Gallery Space

Another area designed to be useful to the aspiring craftsperson is the Access Gallery Space, a small gallery, at present being re-located to the ground floor; it can be rented out by one person or by a small group for a three week period. The rent at present is $40 a week. Individuals must install and supervise their own shows.

As with the workshop spaces, it is envisaged that the gallery could be a good launching pad, with many exhibitors being taken up by the commercial galleries. There is also the benefit of the crowds attracted to the main Centre.

Craft Shop

The Craft Shop was set up to attract overseas visitors looking for Australian-made crafts and to overcome some of the marketing problems which exist at present for high quality craft products. It is a little early to tell if these objectives have been met. Last year the shop took $217,000, but was disrupted for much of the year (the same period saw just under 100,000 visitors). At present about 240 people are selected to be represented.

Marjorie feels they are reaching a wider audience all the time. There are, she says, more tourists coming through all the time and more government departments and companies coming to them for official gifts.

A shop has also been set up at Tullamarine Airport that operates on behalf of the Government Office of Arts, Heritage and the Environment.

The aim of the Centre is to become more self-sufficient: 'It is hard for us to be self-sufficient with such a large education component', Marjorie explained, 'but we now have a much larger income generating capacity. There is the hotel which is now leased as a restaurant; the rents from the various craft associations [that would have had to have been paid elsewhere]; rental fees and the commission from sales. Gradually we should become less dependent on government funding.'

Marjorie, an administrator in the crafts for sixteen years, sees that her role will have to start to change. That she will have to get out into the community more to pursue sponsorship. 'I don't think in this day and age you can expect to get government funding for all the things you would like to see happen.'

A change of role should prove no problem to Marjorie who has held many positions within crafts bodies: 'I have had a very interesting track record with the crafts, as the movement has developed since the 70s I have developed with it.' Apart from her association with the Meat Market Craft Centre, she has managed the Arts and Crafts Society Gallery, was an Executive Officer of the Crafts Association of Victoria, the Vice-President of the Crafts Council of Australia and was also Festival Manager of the 1978 Ministry of the Arts Crafts Festival.

'It is now an exciting time for the Centre. Each year we have been developing a new facility, now for the first time we will really be able to put our energy into consolidating the Centre. We now have all the facilities needed to carry out our initial objectives. Our task is to develop each of those activities to its full potential and to promote the place more.'

'From time to time it will be relevant to run workshops in particular techniques, especially if it means that individuals having had that additional support may then become a user here. We may also run one-off workshops for the public, but our main thrust will always be on professionalism, assisting the growth of the trained craftsperson.'

Peta Landman is a freelance writer and publicist, formerly managing editor of the *Victorian Arts Centre Magazine.*

Ask Dr. Ben

℞

Help me find some gloves to resist dry-cleaning solvents. I have bought so many pairs only to find they become gummy and fall apart. I am a fibre artist using batik.

J.P., Adelaide, SA.

Organic solvents cause dermatitis because they dissolve the oils and protective layers of the skin. However, before discussing the use of protective gloves, it is important to consider whether there are less toxic solvents available to do the job.

The first step is to identify exactly which solvent you are using. Unfortunately, manufacturers often do not adequately label their products. Ask your supplier, or write to the manufacturer for their product data sheets, and for the chemical (generic) name of the product. You can then begin to determine the hazards of the product, whether safer alternatives are available and what protective measures you should take.

Organic solvents can cause damage to other parts of your body other than the skin. They can effect the central nervous system by causing light headedness, dizziness, headache, etc. in the short term; and chronic memory loss, loss of coordination, intellectual impairment, etc. in the long term. They can also damage other organs such as the kidneys, liver, lungs. Thus it is important to consider other preventive measures before protective clothing. Other preventive measures include: 1. substitution with safer solvent. 2. provision of adequate extraction ventilation. 3. avoiding contact by use of tongs or other devices. 4. avoid smoking or eating whilst working with solvents. 5. wear goggles to prevent eye injury from splashes.

Protective clothing should be used after the above measures have been considered.

The type of gloves to be used depend on the type of solvent being used. The following is a guide to which types of gloves are useful for which type of solvents.

1. Nitrile Gloves: used for Aromatic Hydrocarbons; Refined Petroleum Solvents; Chlorinated Hydrocarbons; Alcohols.

2. NBR Rubber (Buna-N) Gloves: Used for Aromatic Hydrocarbons; Refined Petroleum Solvents; Alcohols.

3. Neoprene Rubber Gloves: Used for Refined Petroleum Solvents; Ketones; Alcohols.

4. Latex/Neoprene Gloves: Used for Refined Petroleum Solvents; Ketones; Alcohols.

5. Natural Rubber or Latex Gloves: Used for Ketones; Alcohols.

6. Butyl Rubber Gloves: Used for Ketones, Alcohols.

The following list may assist in identifying solvents and to which class of solvent they belong:

1. Refined Petroleum Solvents: Mineral Spirits including Substitute Turpentine, White Spirits; VM & P Naphtha (Benzine, not to be confused with Benzene); Petrol (highly flammable and explosive . . . do not use.); Petroleum spirits; Kerosene; n-Hexane; Turpentine.

2. Aromatic Hydrocarbons: Benzene (do not use); Styrene (vinyl benzene); Toluene; Xylene.

3. Chlorinated Hydrocarbons: Carbon Tetrachloride (do not use); Methylene Chloride; Trichloroethylene.

4. Ketones: Acetone; Isophorone; Methyl Ethyl Ketone; Methyl n-Butyl Ketone.

5. Alcohols: Ethyl Alcohol; Methyl Alcohol; Isopropyl Alcohol.

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TOUR ITINERARY 1986

Maitland Art Gallery, Jan/Feb.
Wollongong City Art Gallery, Feb/Mar.
Albury Regional Art Centre, Apr/May.
South Australian College of Art, June/July.
Melbourne Meat Market. Craft Centre, July/Aug.
Townsville City Art Gallery, Sept/Oct.
Tamworth City Art Gallery, November.
Bathurst Regional Art Gallery, Dec/Jan '87.

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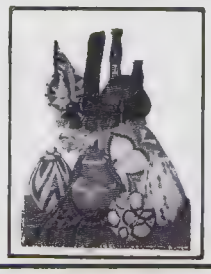

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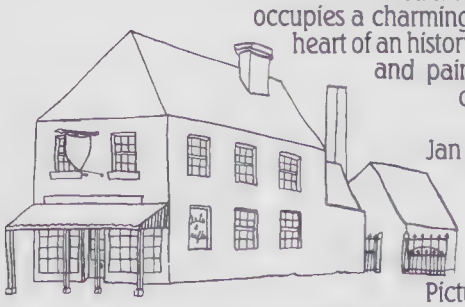

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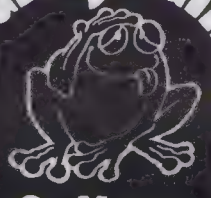

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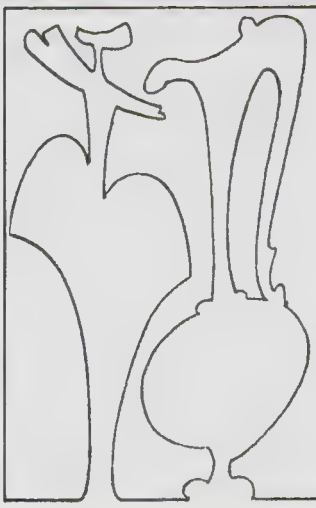

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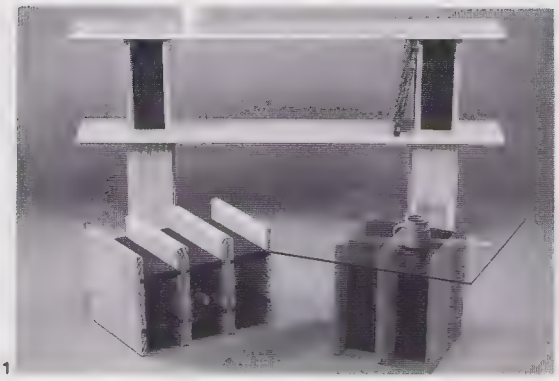

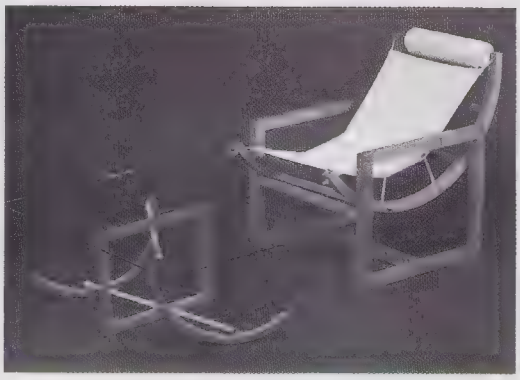

Tasmanian Furniture Design Competition 1984-85

Susan Malm

Two years ago, the Crafts Council of Tasmania initiated a furniture design competition, to provide a link between designers and industry. The second such competition has recently concluded with an exhibition of designer prototypes from eight designers. The competition was assisted by the Tasmanian Arts Advisory Board, who stressed the importance of connecting designers with industry, and the Crafts Board of the Australia Council. It also received support from the Tasmanian Development Authority.

Where the first competition was based around designing restaurant/kiosk furniture, the second was broader in criteria. The definition of the competition being that the designs should be for the lounge room of a domestic environment, with the emphasis on production capability by Tasmanian manufacturers. Consideration was also given to designs applicable for board room, conference room or foyer space. As can be imagined, these guidelines allowed a broad scope to entrants, as well as requiring diverse skills on the part of the judging panel.

This expertise was provided by three judges. Pat Cleveland (of Handmark Gallery), is a gallery director and well-known promoter of Tasmanian craft and design; Ross Madden (of Aero Design Furniture Manufacturers, Melbourne) who provided knowledge of current directions in furniture design and the viability of designs for manufacture and John Clark (of Fenton Timber Products Pty. Ltd.) who brought experience of production and marketing, as well as linking the competition to industry for whom it was relevant. The panel was headed by Claudio Alcorso, an industrialist with strong connections to the arts in Tasmania.

The first stage of the competition, the reception of designers' drawings had a November, 1984 deadline and at this stage a total of 31 drawings were submitted by 23 designers and makers. Disappointingly, very few entries were received from the North of the State. Upon the closure of Stage One, nine designers' drawings were selected as prizewinners and their drawings went on display in the city. These designers were then commissioned to produce full-scale prototypes of their designs, and a period of four months set aside for the development of the prototypes. Designers were not restricted to making the prototypes themselves, thus allowing more freedom to utilise the expertise of others in order to complete the making of designs.

The nine designers delivered prototypes to the Crafts Council of Tasmania in March, 1985 and the winners names announced on the 18th. The design prototypes went on exhibition in the Crafts Council Gallery. Pieces presented ranged through a broad spectrum of furniture and accessories, from coffee tables and lounge chairs to shelving systems, a hi-fi cabinet, as well as desk and floor lamps. Many of the designers used native Tasmanian timbers, Huon pine, myrtle and blackwood, and others. The overall standard of the entries represented a high standard of small-scale furniture production in the State. Prizewinners came from a cross-section of fields, students, full-time designers and those with less formal training in the field.

Under the rules of the competition, the judges were able to award a total of four prizes, altering the distribution of prizemoney as needed. The first prize ($1300) was awarded to David Shaw for his modular shelving units. Second prize ($750) went to Richard Skinner, and third prize ($450) to Nick Stillwell. Both Skinner and Stillwell presented adjustable chairs, although their approaches to the task varied considerably. The first prize winner, David Shaw, is a full-time designer/maker and has recently returned from a period of study in England. His approach to the competition was primarily based on the criterion ease of manufacture. From this basis, Shaw developed his 'supermarket' furniture building module. The prototype, intended for production in easily obtained and machined Radiata pine and Custom wood, was a development of the stacking quality of the brick or concrete block so often used to support a variety of household furniture and items. The block has a number of applications and this factor, along with its simplicity of manufacture and design, made Shaw's piece the winner by an outstanding margin.

Richard Skinner, whose adjustable chair in Tasmanian myrtle with leather and PVC tubing won him the second prize, is a Design in Wood student at the Tasmanian School of Art.

Nick Stillwell's Body Chair was the result of a search for *the* comfortable chair. His approach was one of combining the desired elements, for example, adjustable chair angle, with aesthetic considerations and appropriate timber and upholstery.

The judges decision to award only three, rather than four prizes in the competition reflects a lack of suitability in many of the other prototypes. This second competition has, like the first, created a good deal of interest and controversy among both entrants and public alike. Questions as to the role such competitions can play in the development of closer contacts between 'craft' furniture makers and their counterparts in industry, as well as questions about the role of 'craft' furniture makers themselves, have been raised. The competition may be seen as an exercise in designing for large-scale manufacture. It is also about the promotion of less conventional and less conservative design, furniture that is both successful in functional terms as well as being inventive and aesthetically satisfying. Future competitions will, without doubt, spark again the issues raised by this one, and such discussion can only benefit the designers themselves and the consuming public at large.

Susan Malm is a contributor to *Craft Australia* and a 1983 graduate of the Tasmanian School of Art.

1. The winning entry. David Shaw. *Modular shelving units.*
2. Richard Skinner. *Adjustable chair.*
3. Nick Stillwell. *Body chair.*

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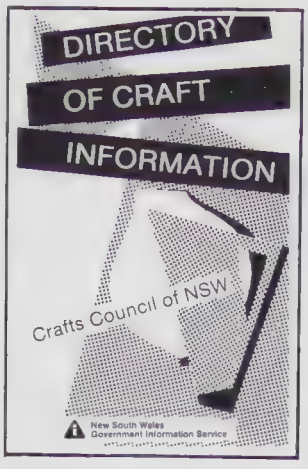

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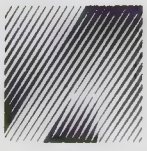

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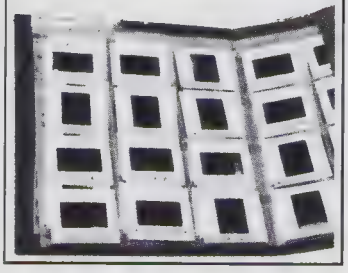

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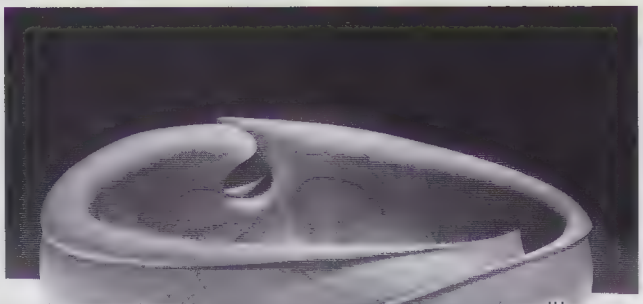

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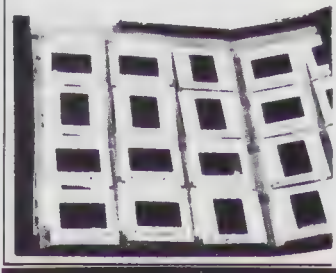

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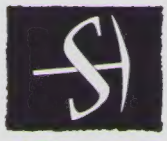

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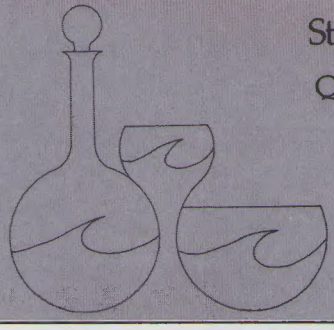

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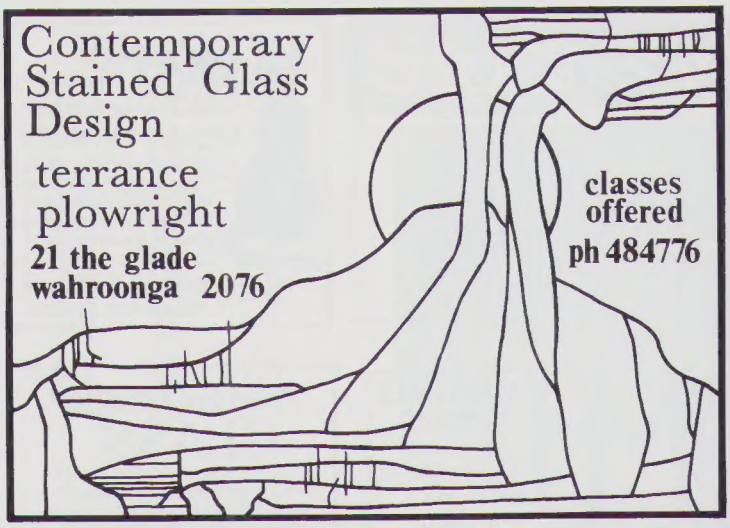

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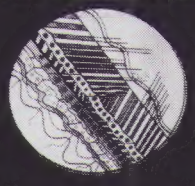

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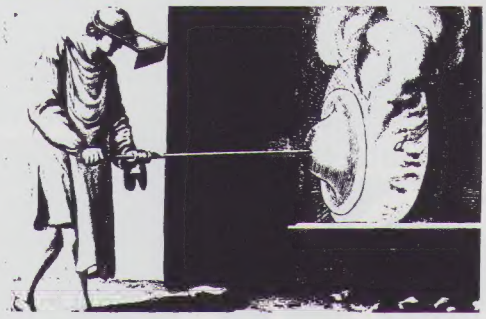

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